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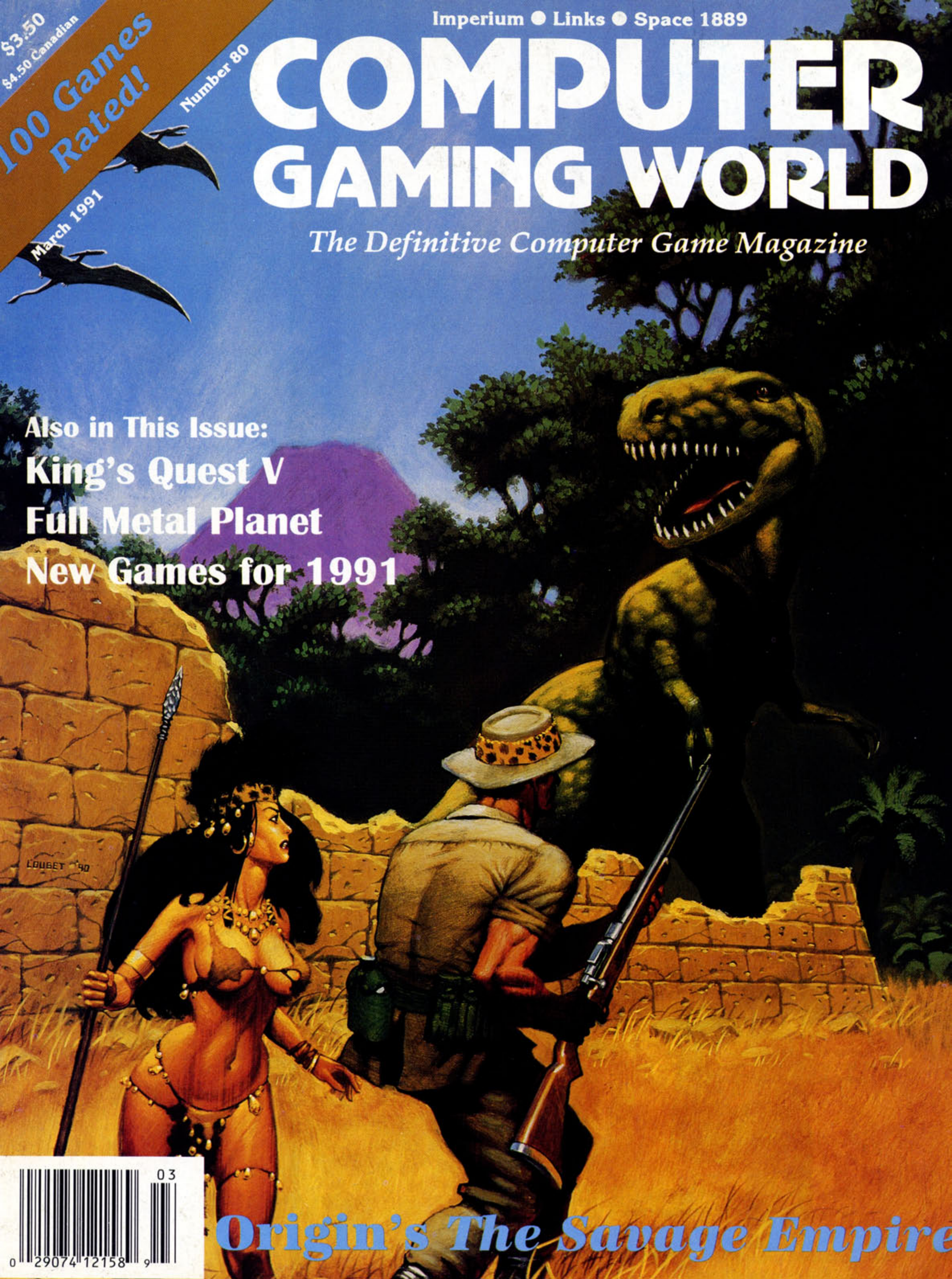
Number 80

March 1991

Imperium ● Links ● Space 1889

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



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King's Quest V

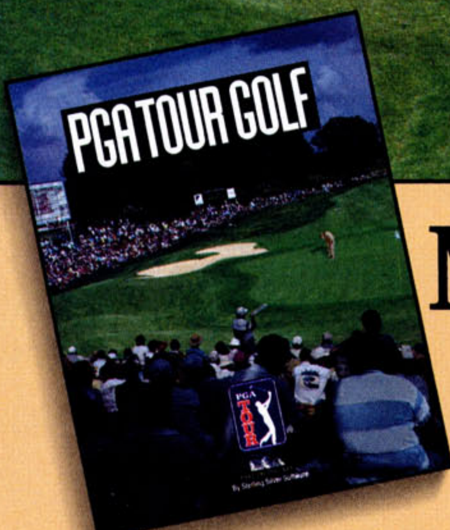
Full Metal Planet

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Origin's The Savage Empire

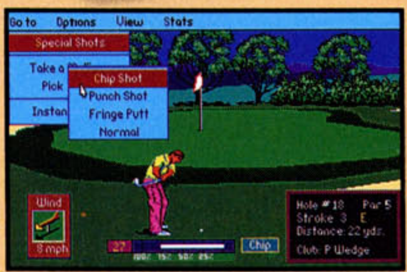
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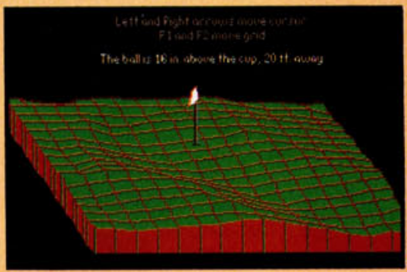
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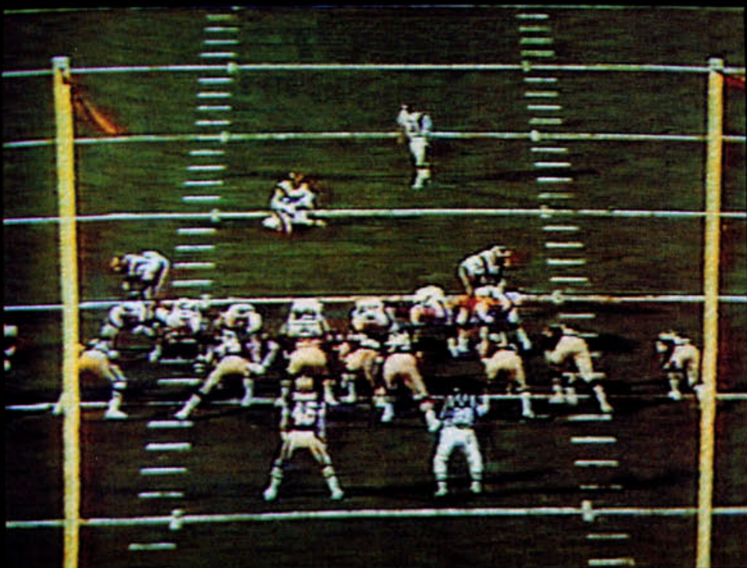
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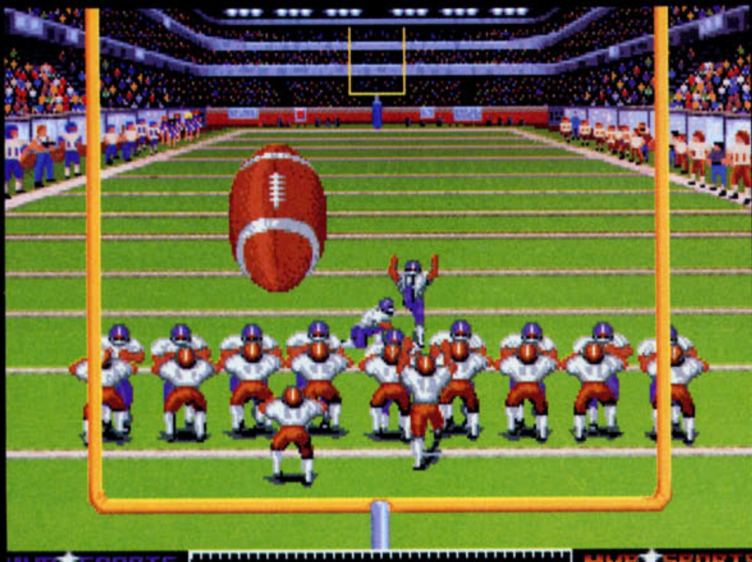
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« Circle Reader Service #30 »

Two ways to play an American tradition.



Play the Tape.



Then Play the Game.

ABC's Monday Night Football is a tradition in more than 20-million American households. Now you can enjoy 20-years of highlights and then make some of your own.

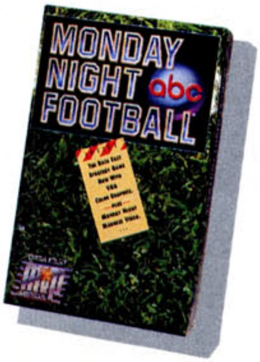
The new ABC's MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL Entertainment Pack features the 20th anniversary *Monday Night Madness* videotape and *ABC's Monday Night Football* computer-software game.

ABC's MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL brings the tradition of football excellence to life in the most realistic computer-football game ever created. The IBM-PC game now features enhanced VGA graphics that put you right on the field. You'll even hear Frank Gifford make the broadcasting calls in key game situations.





MONDAY NIGHT MADNESS captures two decades of the most memorable moments from ABC's weekly football spectacle. There's nothing but action and excitement in this thrilling 48-minute VHS videotape never before available in stores.



The *ABC's Monday Night Football* Entertainment Pack — Either way you play, you win.

Available for IBM-PC/Compatibles and Amiga.

Circle Reader Service #29

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games for Ten Years

March 1991 Number 80



Space 1889 / pg 56



The Savage Empire / pg 24



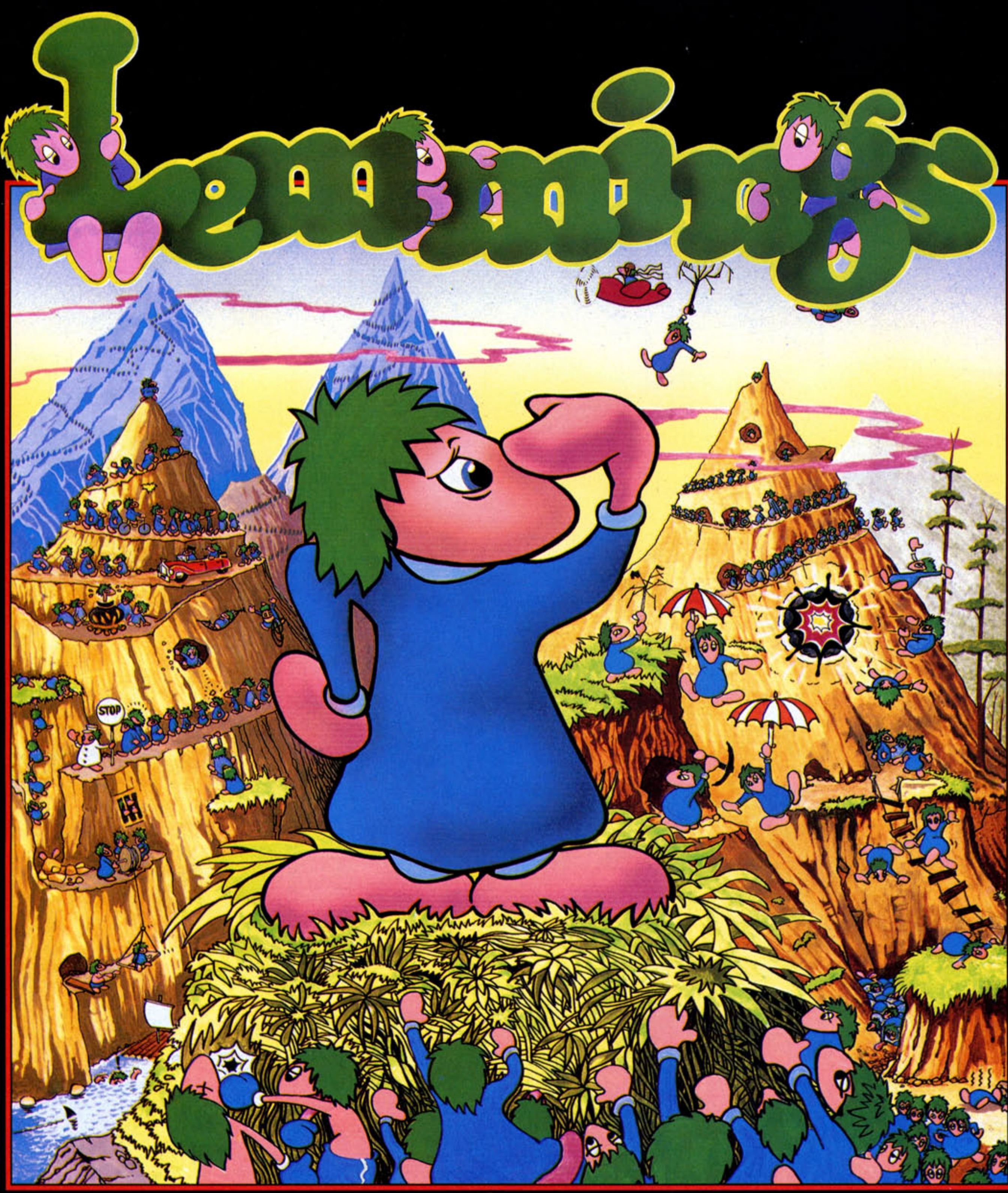
Full Metal Planet / pg 40

Features

Departments

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Circle Reader Service #52 »



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and

Commodore Amiga,
Commodore CDTV,
Atari ST
PC Compatibles

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Brookline, MA 02146
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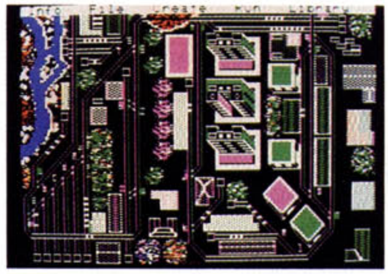
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Eugene, OR 97402

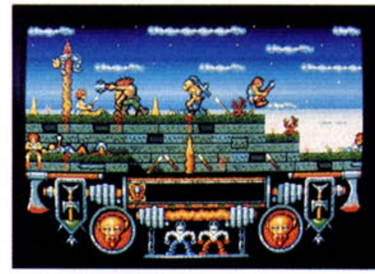
DESIGN YOUR OWN RAILROAD: This product brings the age-old hobby of model railroading to the Apple II computer. Layouts can be designed in any of the more popular scales (Z, N, HO, S, G, and O), complete with scenery, switches, overpasses, tunnels, etc. Locomotives can then be run, with cars coupled to them or uncoupled to deadhead, as players haul freight and collect revenue. ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

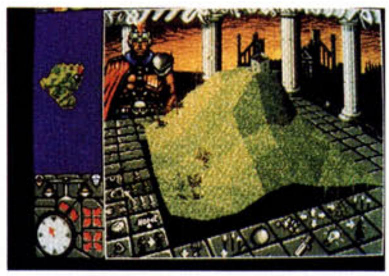
Cinemaware
Westlake Village, CA

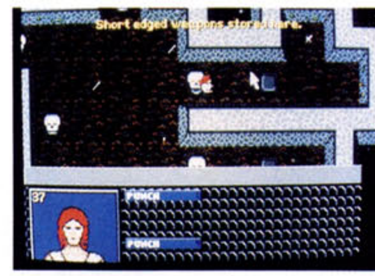
ARCADE FEVER: Two disks and two games in one package. These twin "twitch and flex" exercises include "Stormlord," a fantasy hero versus all comers, and "Onslaught," a large game (10 world maps with 256 locations) with considerable depth for an arcade game. Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

DRAGON LORD: This strategy game puts one to three players (on the same computer) in the role of raising, rather than slaying, dragons. With limited resources, players must make optimal use of time and money in an attempt to find the three pieces of the magic talisman. An exhaustive magic system is also included, which will challenge even the most hard-core fantasy game player. Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($49.95). Circle Service #3.


Design Your Own Railroad


Arcade Fever


Powermonger


Dark Spyre


Chaos Strikes Back


Final Orbit

Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA

POWERMONGER: As previewed in the January, 1991 issue of Computer Gaming World magazine. Amiga, Atari ST ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Electronic Zoo
Baltimore, MD

DARK SPYRE: A fine, elaborate role-playing game in which the single hero takes on the challenges of the Dark Spyre. Whether the hero is right- or left-handed makes a difference; there are detailed weapons (including ranged weapons), armor, magic, etc. The game uses a split-screen, overhead 3-D display which keeps the whole game right at the player's fingertips. IBM ($49.95) A separate clue book ($9.95) and, more interestingly, game editor ($19.95) are also available. Circle Reader Service #5.

FTL
P.O. Box 710490
San Diego, CA 92171

CHAOS STRIKES BACK: A scenario for the popular "Dungeon Master" game, billed as "Expansion Set #1." Not only is the scenario more challenging, but new features include editors for hero pictures, names and titles, as well as a hint oracle for those who need it. For those who need even more help, a separate "Chaos" Clue Book is available ($15.00). Amiga. Circle Reader Service #6.

Innerprise
128 Cockeysville Road
Hunt Valley, MD 21030

FINAL ORBIT: Garbage... the final frontier. So much has been dumped on the Moon that hostile life forms have evolved from it and threaten the Earth. As a member of Earth's elite sanitation corps, the player (and a friend, for two can play at the same computer) must maneuver through mazes zapping "loonies" at every turn in this arcade game. IBM. Circle Reader Service #7.

Interplay
Santa Ana, CA

THE LORD OF THE RINGS VOLUME 1: As previewed in the September, 1990 issue of Computer Gaming world. IBM ($54.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Sega of America
573 Forbes Boulevard
S. San Francisco, CA 94080

CRACK DOWN: The cyborgs have gone berserk, so the player's character, as well

Advertiser Index

Circle Reader Service #46 »

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Russian game designer Dima Pavlovsky delivers three times the fun of TETRIS™ with **Troika**, an addicting trilogy of gaming masterpieces to test your reflexes, strategy and grace under pressure. From the fast-paced arcade thriller *Rebel Planets* to the ingenious construction challenge *Metal Hearts* to *Ivan*, a time-travelling adventure filled with intriguing visual puzzles, each game is guaranteed to prevent you from doing anything resembling work.

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as a buddy's (two can play at the same computer) get to race through the mazes taking out these "half-cans" in an attempt to preserve "pure, biological life." C-64 ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Simulations Canada
Nova Scotia, Canada

FLEET MED: Though devoid of graphics like all SimCan wargames, these titles offer some of the most detailed number-crunching of all. *Fleet Med* emphasizes pre-mission planning and true "fog of war" during operations between Italy and Britain during 1940-42. Simulated radio communication between ships is the key to player decision-making. IBM ($60.00). Circle Reader Service #10.

MAIN BATTLE TANK NORTH GERMANY: Maneuver tactical units of modern armor through such missions as advance to contact, Soviet spearhead, British isolated defense, German counterattack, etc. Issuing orders and keeping a cool head as reports come in are the key to command in this game. IBM ($60.00). Circle Reader Service #11.

Sir-Tech
Ogdensburg, NY

FREAKIN' FUNKY FUZZBALLS: This arcade game provides an engrossing mix of reflex exercising and making the right (read: strategic) maneuvers across the board in an attempt to evade and destroy the computer's relentless opposition. For one or two players at the same computer. With two players, the second player hunts down the first who plays the Fuzzball. IBM ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Three-Sixty
Campbell, CA

DAS BOOT: Complete with book (and a discount coupon for the movie), this WWII German U-Boat simulator offers the complete gamut of missions across all of the watery theaters in and near the Atlantic. Combining arcade sequences and strategic elements, the player mans AA guns and deck guns, maneuvers through mine fields, avoids depth charge attacks and conducts torpedo runs (there is even sub-versus-sub combat). 256-color VGA graphics. This one is grand in scope. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Ubi Soft
511 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Suite C
Greenbrae, CA 94904

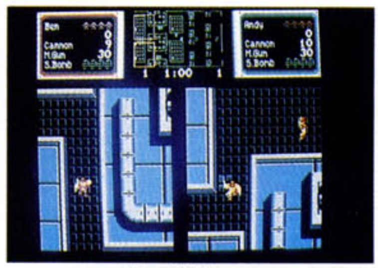
B.A.T.: As a futuristic secret agent from "B.A.T." (Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters), the player must save Terrapolis. In this adventure game, one visits over 1,000 locations and flies in a 3-D flight-simulator space ship. Imported from France, the surreal style is something to see. C-64 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

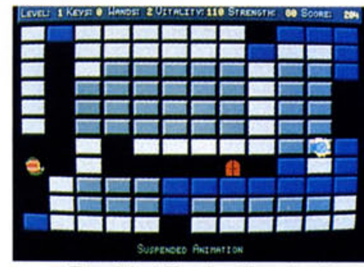
Virgin Mastertronic
Irvine, CA

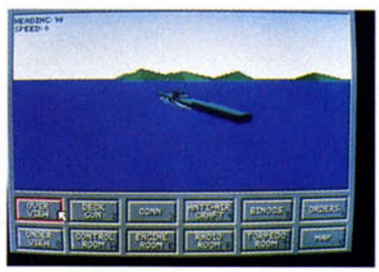
WONDERLAND: With a "something for everyone" interface, "Wonderland" offers a text (with graphics) adventure full of the sort of bizarre logic for which the Lewis Carroll story is famous. As Alice, there are no shortages of puzzles to solve, and fascinating sights to see. Using multiple windows for information displays, the story is *no* cartoon, but for serious(?) adventure gamers. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #15.


The Lord of the Rings

Please Fill Out the Reader Input Device Card Opposite Page 8

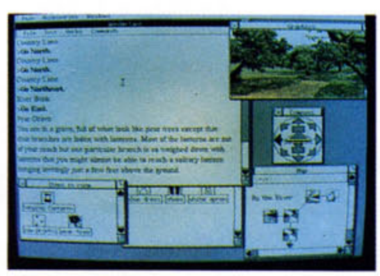

Crack Down

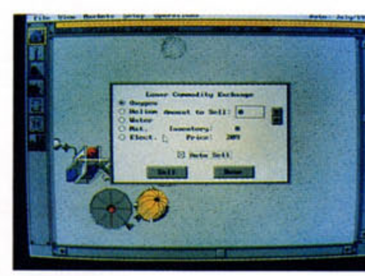

Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs


Das Boot



B.A.T.


Wonderland


Moonbase

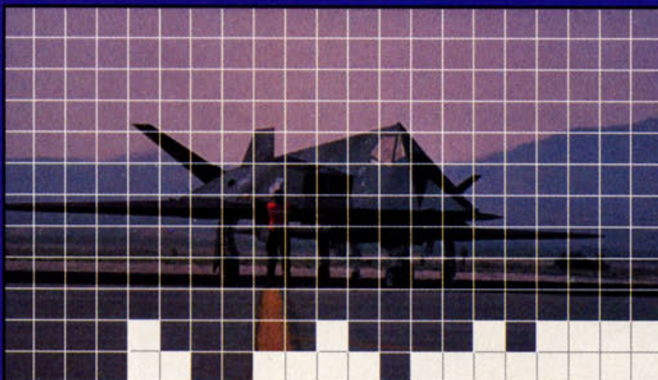
Wesson International
500 S. Capital of Texas Hwy
Bldg. 5, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78746

MOONBASE: LUNAR COLONY SIMULATOR: This "SimLuna" game has put NASA on a mission to establish an *economically viable* base on the moon. There is only ten years and a limited NASA budget to work with, but this *SimCity* style engine works well with the economic model presented for play. More of a game and less of a "toy model" than *SimCity*, *Moonbase* has the player making some tough tough decisions throughout the 10-year span of time it covers. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #16. **CGW**

Conversions Received

A-10 Tank Killer (Dynamix) Amiga
Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess (Data East) IBM
Conquests of Camelot (Sierra) ST
Deluxe Paint (EA) ST
Drakkhen (Data East) IBM
Full Count (Lance Haffner) IBM
It Came from...Desert (Cinemaware) IBM
The Manhole (Activision) IBM
MicroLeague Football (MicroLeague) C64
Star Control (Accolade) Amiga
Thunder Strike (Live Studios) IBM
TV Sports Basketball (Cinemaware) IBM

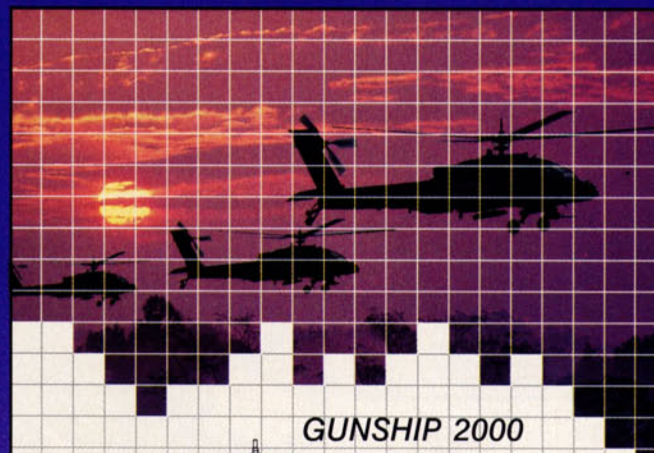
Three New Fantasies From MicroProse. Only One Of Them Is Make-Believe.



F-117A NIGHTHAWK

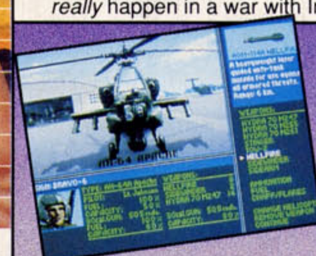
Piloting ***F-117A Nighthawk Stealth Fighter 2.0*** is fantastic, but it's no flight of fancy. It's a thoroughly-researched, sophisticated simulation of America's radar-elusive jet. New scenarios (including Iraq), more powerful weapons and even better graphics than in *F-19*, the game the Software Publishers Association voted Simulation of the Year in 1989.

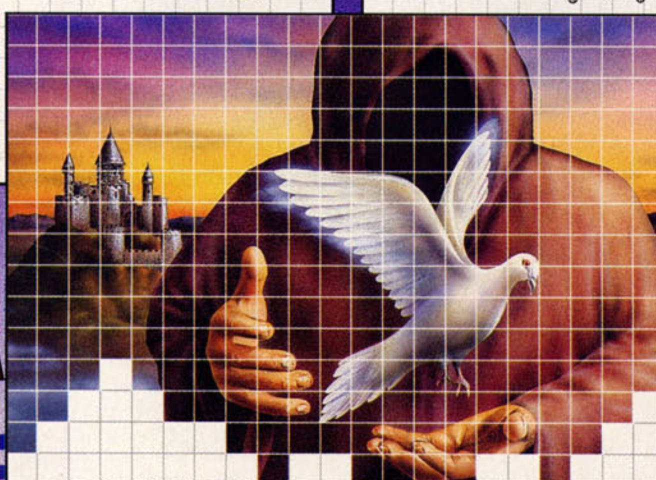




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DARKLANDS

Make-believe is best when it's believable. That's why ***Darklands*** is so exciting. It's a fantasy role-playing quest through medieval Germany re-created just the way medieval Germans actually believed it to be. The troubled realm cries out for a true hero to deliver it from its demons, alchemists, superstitions, unholy religions and a whole host of other fantastically believable challenges.

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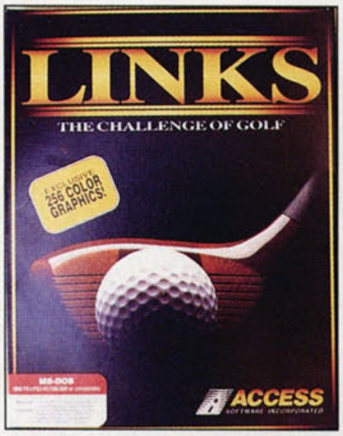
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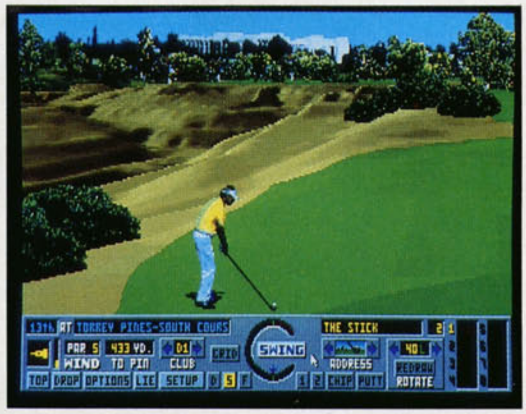
Worlds Apart: Access' *Links*

The Successor to World Class Leader Board

by H.E. Dille

TITLE:	Links
SYSTEM:	IBM (w/ VGA, Hard Drive, 640K)
# PLAYERS:	1-8
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNERS:	Vance Cook, Kevin Homer, and Roger Carver
PUBLISHER:	Access Software Bountiful, Utah





Links is a new golf game that revolutionizes graphic standards. Graphic detail is the name of the game. For example, in recreating Torrey Pines South (the course that comes with the game), the design team at **Access** used over five hundred ground and aerial photographs, as well as videotape, to create their model. These were digitized and compiled into a 256-color, 320 x 200 resolution, three-dimensional environment. The end result is a display of near photographic quality that is so detailed that one truly feels like he is on the course. Players are able to witness a portion of how this effect is achieved each time the screen updates. First, the terrain model is sculpted using a vector graphics routine that creates a three-dimensional wire-frame topographic representation. Second, the area is colored, shadowed and highlighted to enhance the undulating feel of the terrain. Finally, digitized renditions of the actual vegetation, tee markers, ball washers, cart paths and background are overlaid for the full effect. The combined environment makes it easy for players to temporarily suspend reality and become immersed in the course. In this respect, *Links* is unequaled by other golf simulators currently on the market.

Lessons From The Pro

Before hitting the *Links*, however, there are a few things players must know. As impressive as the graphics and sound algorithms are, they are still quite complex and time-consuming to execute. The program is capable of using extended or expanded memory to speed these functions considerably, but many players may lack that luxury. As such, Access has also made it possible to speed play by either limiting/eliminating sounds, or altering the level of detail (Min, Med, Max) for each distance (Near, Med, Far). The need to do either is regrettable, but losing sound is much less painful than going to minimum graphic detail.

The greatest strength of *Links* is superior graphics. As such, owners of 12-Mhz machines or below should consider the following before making a decision to purchase. This reviewer evaluated *Links* on a 25-Mhz 80386, 1 MB RAM, ATI VGA Wonder card, Ad Lib sound board, and still found that screen updates between shots required 8-14 seconds, depending on the variety of terrain contour. This time lag, and the exponentially higher one for less capable machines, may seem excessive to the reader. Rest assured, however, that upon viewing the ensuing graphical presentation, one will consider it worth the wait.

Teeing Off

When booting the game, players will note that the main selection screen is slightly different than the picture in the manual. The demonstration mode, high score card and female "golfer" options were deleted at the last minute due to memory restrictions (Each "golfer" image requires 72 frames of video to animate through the three basic strokes). The remaining selections include a system setup menu, practice options (both driving range and chipping/putting area), file management areas and a chance to play. Players can save their preferences in terms of difficulty level, tees to be used and which thirteen clubs out of the twenty available will be carried. The level of difficulty selected has a major impact on how forgiving the program is for slices and hooks and the degree that wind impacts one's shots. Lower levels *simplify* ball control but *minimize* the maximum distances one can hit the ball. The beginner level is extremely easy and should be considered for children only.

The course selection screen must also be visited prior to play, even though Torrey Pines is currently the only available course. Access assures us that additional courses like the one in Bountiful, Utah (home of Access) and the infamous Firestone Country Club course (Akron, Ohio) should be out by the time this issue hits the stands.

In The Fairway

In addition to great graphics, *Links* offers some special features which allow players to customize the program. In addition to the basic shots (draw, straight, fade, chip and putt), players may set up two other special swings which may be used with any clubs of the player's choice. For example, one will probably want to design a swing for a "pitch and run" shot. Also, if one plays like this reviewer (i.e. adventurously journeying into the scenic beauty of nature where no golfer has gone before), a low line-drive shot may be designed. This shot seeks to keep the ball less than two feet off the ground, thereby avoiding the vegetation which keeps entangling one's club on the backswing, and impart sufficient velocity to plow a furrow from the point of impact to the near horizon (hopefully in the general direction of the pin). These effects and others may be achieved through using the Swing Setup Panel to modify the swing plane, stance, ball position and club face.

The remainder of the Swing Panel serves as both an information display and control interface. The display is designed to be as unobtrusive as possible while providing players with all that they need: hole number, course, par, yardage, club selected, wind direction and speed, scores for all players in the round and which player is up. The control portion of the panel may be manipulated with either keyboard, joystick or mouse. Players may call up an overhead view of the hole, with their position clearly marked, observe the lie of the ball via a close up inset window, or rotate the first person perspective (useful when stuck behind trees or other obstacles). Additionally, one may select which of the six swing types will be used, modify the game options without re-booting and control penalty drops (strict PGA rules are enforced). The best new feature is the ability to step away from the ball and take a few practice swings prior to addressing the shot.

Actual shot control is handled similarly to all of the other golf simulations on the market. The major difference is that, instead of a

SOME OF HITLER'S DEADLIEST WEAPONS NEVER SAW ACTION. UNTIL NOW.



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In *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe,* you'll do more than relive the air combat over Germany from 1943 to 1945. You'll decide for yourself whether these exotic superweapons could have changed the outcome of the war.

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bar, the swing indicator is shaped like the letter "C," with a vertical line intersecting the top and bottom at the center. The top mark indicates the maximum safe power without overswing, while the lower mark indicates the proper wrist "snap" to impart. Also, the swing indicator changes for both chipping and putting to allow for slower, more deliberate shot placement.

Players may select an aiming point for their shots by "clicking" on any area of the main screen at any distance. Doing so places a red and white striped bar at that point, indicating the direction of aim (*not* the point of impact) and a readout gives the range to the bar. This feature is also useful for easily determining the range to the edge of the fairway landing area from the tee, the distance to a critically placed sand trap or any number of other things that may affect one's club selection.

After each shot, players are given the option of continuing, taking a penalty drop if necessary, or (bless them for this inclusion) taking a "mulligan." Mulligans allow one to hit a new ball from the same spot without affecting one's score, but the number of mulligans taken is recorded on the score card (which may be printed out at the end of a round).

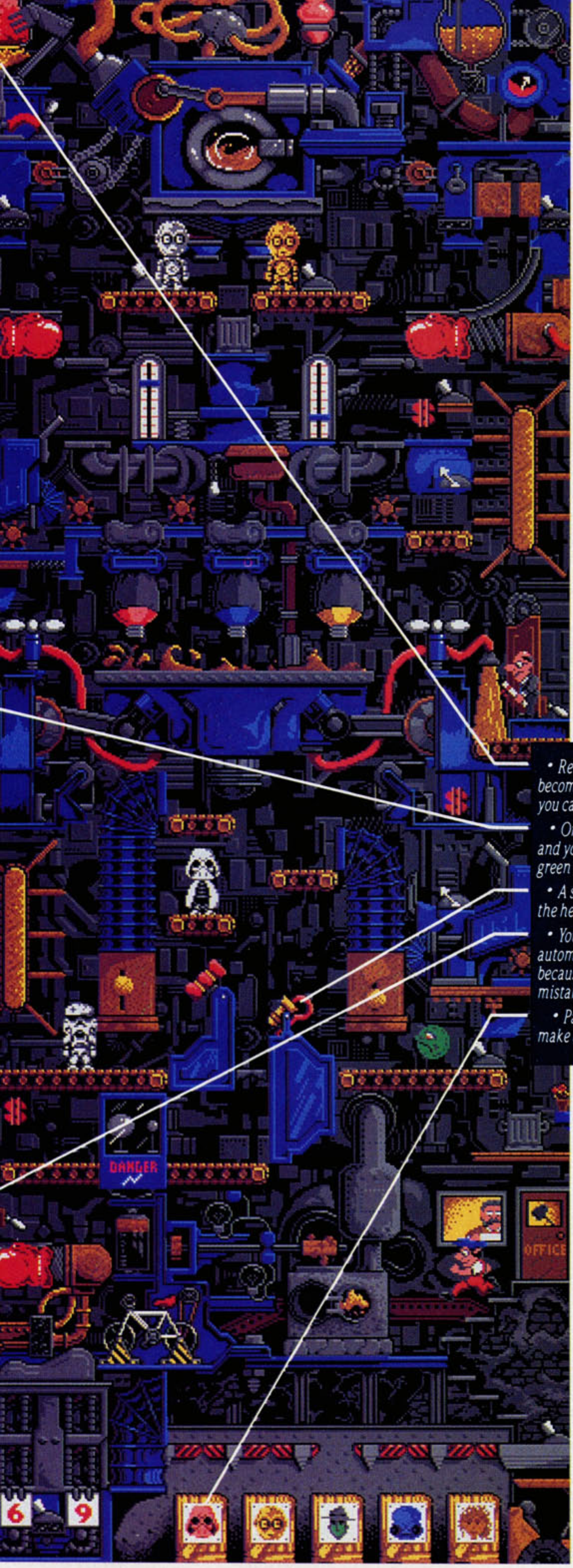
Once on the green, *Links* stands out from the competition again. Most simulations on the market use either generic pancake greens with a single slope indicator or multi-faceted greens that may only be analyzed by overlaying a white or yellow putting grid. The latter creates more realistic putts, but does so at a corresponding loss of scenic realism. The greens in *Links*, due to the detail of their shadowing and highlighting (with every rise and depression taken from the actual grade drawings), can often be "read" with the naked eye! It is still possible to use a grid overlay, but the grid is as inconspicuous as possible because it is only a slightly lighter shade of green than the background.

Penalty Strokes

In spite of the matters *Links* handles brilliantly, the current version does not contain a number of the options to which players may have become accustomed. It lacks both computer opponents and allowances for skins, match, best ball and tournament play. Also, despite the fact that the digitized comments are clear and emotional (like an emphatic-sounding "Get there" when one has just under hit and the computer "knows" it will be inches short of the hole), this reviewer found that the wildlife sounds and background music were "tinny" and annoying. It appears as if Access simply ported their RealSound process (great for those equipped with internal speakers only) through the **AdLib** board instead of taking direct advantage of the board's capabilities. Finally, there are a couple of areas where the graphics are clearly not up to par (pun intended) with the rest of the program. Specifically, the close detail for sand traps and water hazards is insufficient. The former lack those raised lips on the leading edge which golfers love/hate/love/hate...well, that's the nature of the game. The latter appear as flat blue blobs that simply seem out of context with their surroundings. Players who are unhappy with any of these minor shortcomings, or have other suggestions on how the product can be improved for future releases, may contact Access directly. The company is keeping a running tab and is quite responsive to user comments, a number of which are already being incorporated into the next upgrade.

The 19th Hole

One thing is readily apparent to even the most casual observer: *Links* is one of the first of a new generation. It and all of its descendents will be around for some time to come. Computer duffers and 16-bit pros alike have to raise a glass to **Access**'s worthy successor to *World Class Leader Board*. They are definitely worlds apart. **CGW**



LucasArts on the art and science of entertainment

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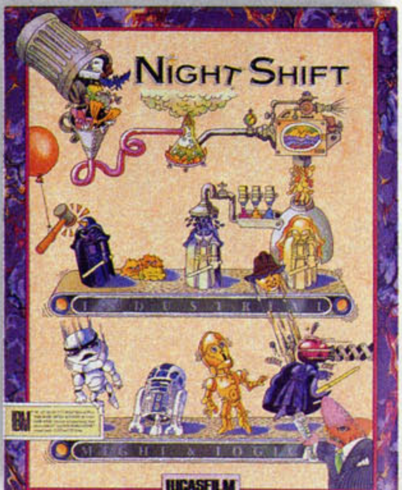
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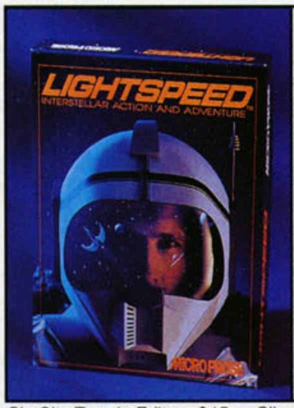


'ELVIRA MISTRESS OF THE DARK' from **ACCOLADE** gives you the look and feel of a graphic adventure with the depth of a fantasy roleplaying game. An enormous 800 room castle, with over 300 objects, combat and interaction with more than 100 characters make for over 100 hours of gameplay. Sound board support, 256 color VGA graphics and digitized voices bring the game to life.

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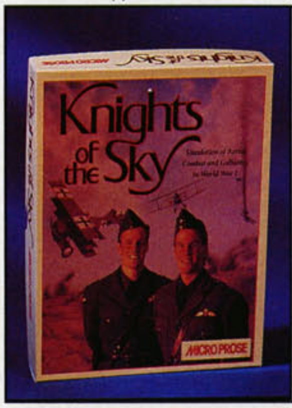
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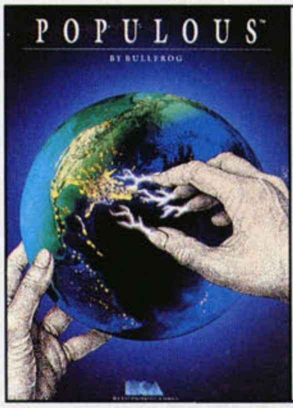
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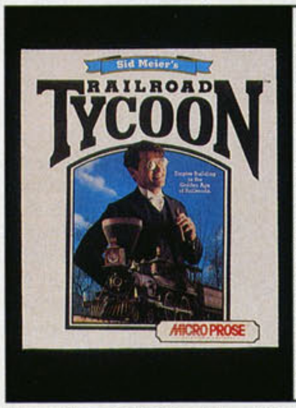


In **'BARD''S TALE III: THIEF OF FATE'** from **ELECTRONIC ARTS** something has sealed Skara Brae with an unspeakable evil. You must break this evil spell. Over 100 spells, 7 kinds of spellcasters, 500 monsters 84 dungeon levels and 7 dimensions make this the largest bard's tale ever. Auto mapping enhanced save game, and faster game play are big improvments on previous versions.

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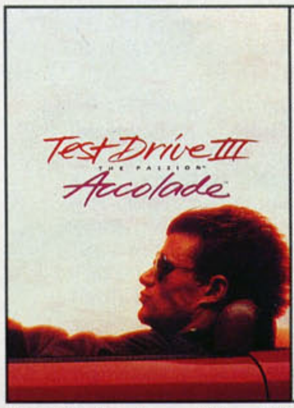
SID MEIER'S 'RAILROAD TYCOON' from **MICROPROSE** is a game of empire building in the golden age of railroads. You lay track, schedule trains, operate signals, manipulate stock, engage in rate wars, and build industry all in an effort to outwit, outsmart, out scoundrel the rail barrons of history. It is not easy. This is CGW game of the year and one of the best games of all time.

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The Rumor Bag

by Hamor Bar-Salaam Al-Petha
Dateline Jan. 8,1991 — Manama, Bahrain



Okay, so it makes people nervous for a guy with a Middle Eastern name to wear a bag over his head during an international flight. My credentials were in order and I had as much right as anyone to spend 24 hours in a combination jet lag/wait state. Of course, **Microprose** officials find themselves in an excited "wait state" over Sid Meier's next project, *Civilization*. As my plane kept getting "bumped" for innumerable military aircraft to take precedence, I checked my notes. The goal of the game is to start a town and build it to the level of a full civilization. One will allegedly compete against five computer-managed opponents (more than 50% of the design effort is expected to go into the artificial opponents) in exploring a square grid map (as in *Empire*), making trades, signing peace treaties, offering tribute and, probably, going to war. The scope of the game goes from 3,000 B.C. to the present day.

Finally, I arrived at BIA (Bahrain International Airport). Bahrain, a 255-square-mile nation adjacent to Saudi Arabia, is (in spite of the current state of affairs), one of the resort areas of the gulf. However, they aren't used to having "Rumor Bag" guys around and I found myself faced with a difficult task. In order to enter the country, I had to prove that I was financially viable and not likely to end up as a drain on the local economy. This, of course, is not an easy task for a writer! So, after a three-hour detention in customs in which I had to show a TRW Credentials printout of my credit and bribed them with an unconfirmed rumor that a game based on **FASA**'s *BattleTech* universe would probably appear on the 16-bit Nintendo before the end of the year, I was finally allowed to enter the "Pearl of the Gulf." The customs agents *did* want to know whether the game would be more like *MechWarrior* or *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge*, however, but all I could do was admit that I hadn't found out, but was betting on the former because of the new Nintendo's great screen-handling characteristics.

I managed to meet the interpreter I had contracted for; acquire a rental car; and head for downtown Manama in traffic that, atypically for Bahrain, seemed like rush hour in Tokyo. Speaking of Tokyo, I passed the "Pearl Monument" and remembered what the guidebook had said about Bahrain being one of the world's chief sources of pearls prior to the Japanese introduction of cultured pearls in the 1930s. I asked my interpreter if he had seen the Japanese computer game *A-Train* which deals with high speed, modern Japanese rail transport. He had not only seen the game, but he had interpreted for a Japanese software executive only the week before. According to the Japanese executive, **Artdink**, the Japanese developer of *A-Train* and **Maxis**, the *SimCity* publisher, have agreed to publish a U.S. version of the game.

I drove into downtown Manama and checked into the Gulf Hotel, the poshest five-star establishment in the region. After all, rumor guys have to travel first class. I was relieved to see that, in spite of all the uniforms around, a siege mentality had not developed. I made an off-hand remark to this effect and my interpreter surprised me with a probing question. "What do you know of **Mindcraft**'s upcoming *The Siege*?" Apparently, that Japanese executive knew something of the American market, as well. I told my interpreter that the game is expected to be real-time combat which reflects both conquering and defending castles. Typical to **Mindcraft**, there will be fantasy elements in the game because one's enemies in the game will be monsters with various strengths and weaknesses.

Doesn't one *always* characterize one's enemies as non-human, though? The *Wing Commander* series will continue, with not only the two Secret Mission Disks (one currently on the market as this is written and the other due as this issue goes on sale), but *Wing Commander II: Vengeance of the Kilrathi* is a late Spring release in which the technology and action is put to work in telling a *story*. I told my interpreter that the ferocious felines in the game, known as the Kilrathi, have developed a stealth technology and are insidiously using cloaking devices to sneak by the "good guys." They even manage to blow up the "Tiger's Claw" before the game really gets off the ground. I told him that Ellen Guon, former scriptwriter for the *G.I. Joe* and *JEM* animated cartoon series for television (and co-author of the novel, *Knight of Ghosts and Shadows*) has written an amazing script for the game.

My interpreter happened to be a cat fancier and rather resented the caricatures of the Kilrathi in the game, vaguely reminded me of the flap over the **PBS** television special on cats. So, I quickly told him that everyone can design their own alien "bad guys" in **Mindcraft**'s late '91 sequel to *Breach 2*. It is to be called *Mercenaries*. Unlike the earlier games, however, every character is handled individually with current statistics and history saved after each mission. Now, players can be concerned with everyone in the squad and not just the SL (squad leader).

I told the interpreter it was time to go to work, so we left my bags, hopped into the car and drove past the Mind Sulman pier. Noting the aggregation of warships, I stopped and set to work. I tried to enter the immediate area, only to find out that the BDF (Bahrain Defense Force) looked with disfavor upon my bag-encapsulated visage. I told him I wanted to see what experienced naval officers thought of the new Mediterranean Battle Set for *Harpoon*. He didn't seem convinced when I told him that it would place less emphasis on big warships because of the use of naval forces from smaller countries. Even when I assured him it would have an entirely different "feel" from the North Atlantic Battle Set because of the inclusion of these smaller forces and vessels, he raised his automatic machine pistol and directed me to move on.

I immediately found myself on Shaikh Isa bin Sulman Highway and "cruised" the downtown. I briefly noted that it was a curious blend of Eastern and Western culture, but that was only the beginning of my discoveries. **CGW**

(To Be Continued)







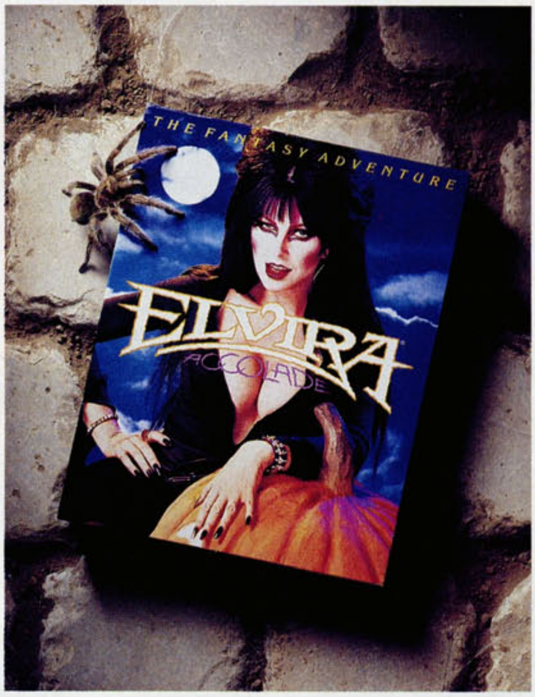
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Economics, Ergonomics, Intelligence and Innovation

Trends and Perceptions from the Winter Consumer Electronics Show

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOWS

The arena was filled with festive partygoers, families from Missoula, Montana, and the sound of the overture for a spectacle soon to begin. The audience, which included movers and shakers in the computer entertainment industry, had been prompted by jesters, wenches and lords to raise their hands and cheer with loud "huzzahs." The arena darkened. A young male rode his splendid white mare, galloping around the arena. Then, stopping suddenly, he fell to the ground. His noble steed awaited his certain uprising for a surprisingly long time, but seeing that her young master did not rise, she turned her head and ran off seeking help. Merlin, Arthur's mage from a more mysterious and chivalrous time proclaimed that the young man would dream and in that dream, he would find the adventure and romance he sought.

Thus begins King Arthur's Tournament at the Excalibur Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. As developers, executives and members of the press gathered to celebrate both **Interplay Productions**' independent status as publisher and official announcement of their *Castles* product (see *CGW* #79), the staged spectacle foreshadowed the crowd's impressions of the industry.

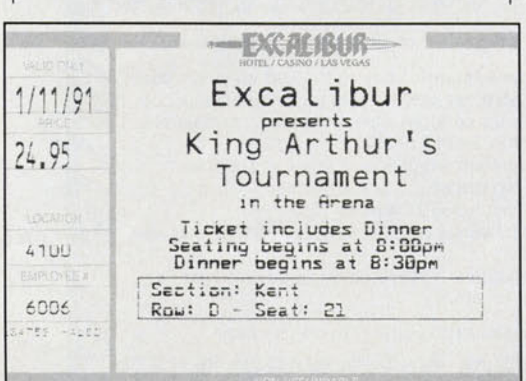
To Sleep, Perchance to Dream (Economics)

Even as the young man in the Excalibur dinner show feigned the deep sleep of a possible injury and the show itself depicted his romantic dream, the software publishers and journalists involved in the Winter CES had arrived at the show with an impression that the economy was going to be slow to rebound in 1991 and that the result would be a sleepy period of economic belt-tightening, marked by release of only a few products.

Mark Beaumont, a **Data East** vice-president, was interviewed by a syndicated radio reporter prior to the actual start of the show and noted that, particularly on the cartridge-based entertainment side, the 8-bit machines had reached a saturation point in the market where companies could expect to engage in heavy discounting. He noted that the industry was still selling approximately the same number of units in the marketplace, but the discounting had cut the profit margin considerably. The executive was surprisingly optimistic, however, about the 16-bit Nintendo product to debut in Fall, 1991 and his company's new licensing agreement with **Sega**. He cautiously suggested that the new platform would, in particular, drive sales of new games later in the year.

Richard Kraft, president and CEO of **Matsushita Electric Corporation of America**, subsidiary of the huge Japanese conglomerate, referred to the economic doomsaying in the keynote address which opened the show. He compared the 1991 economic gloom with the 1981-1982 pessimism. The latter had suggested that there was no way that the consumer electronics industry could hope to equal the records set in the previous decade. Instead, consumer electronics grew at a nominal average growth rate of 12% during the decade while the national average was a nominal average growth of 7%. He suggested that one way to succeed in a short-term downturn and experience the benefits of long-term growth is to have an intensified focus on high quality. *CGW* already sees this emphasis on quality product beginning to "tone up" an unsettled industry.

Although some journalists lamented the lack of trend-setting products displayed at the show, leading one to believe that there might no longer be sufficient research and development budgets to create "cutting edge" titles, the overall impression of the show was of incremental improvement in both design and technology. As usual, the mix of announced and unannounced products at WCES gave up its yield of innovative and potentially electrifying products. There is still plenty of "romance and adventure" in the entertainment software business for everyone.



I Feel Comfortable with That (Ergonomics)

Not only do the game designs expected to be seen in 1991 reflect an emphasis on the player's individual preferences, but the hardware peripherals which will be introduced in 1991 reflect this attention to the gamer, as well. Hardware companies are seeking ergonomic solutions to insure the gamer's comfort. **Spectra Video** is launching two space-opera style joysticks, designed with hand-held comfort in mind. Like the **Wico** *Ergostick* before them, they are designed to fit comfortably in a player's hand. Flight simulator enthusiasts will be more interested, however, in the **Psygnosis**-designed, **Spectra**-marketed *Combat Flight Controller*. This stick, due to be officially launched at Summer's CES, enables programmers to designate buttons as "functions." In this way, one button could represent a plane's cannons, another its rockets, and yet others target selection and fire buttons.

Even the **Sega** *Game Gear*, the hand-held color portable game machine, demonstrates concern for the player's comfort. The *Game Gear* is a compact unit (approximately 8" x 5" x 2"), rounded ergonomically so that one does not have to grip squared corners and hard edges over long periods of time. In addition, the company suggests that the software designed for the system (it is incompatible with the *Genesis* and *Master* systems) be customized to make the action easier to see on the smaller screen.

Beyond pure gaming applications, **Logitech** announced a line of ergonomic pointing devices, called the *MouseMan*. The new models were designed by **Frog Design** with software testing using **Bio-Mechanics Corporation of America, Inc.**'s *Human CADD* program. The program allows designers to engineer

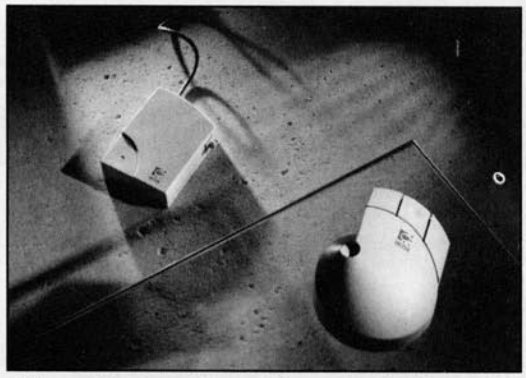
human factors on-screen and, essentially, test prototypes before they are built. The series also includes left-handed mice and mice for larger hands as part of the new series. A Macintosh version of the *MouseMan* series is expected to be released in April.

One very impressive addition to the line is a cordless mouse which can be used without direct line of sight. The *MouseMan Cordless* allows one to connect a low-frequency (100-150 kHz) radio receiver to either the bus or serial port. Then, the *MouseMan Cordless* transmits to the receiver on one of eight possible channels. Since the receiver has a short cord and the transmitter has a six foot effective range, one can effectively use the cordless mouse up to approximately eleven feet from the monitor. This has several implications for gaming (ability to sit across the room and play a game on a large monitor, not having to sit so close to a standard monitor, getting more people comfortably in front of the monitor, etc.), all of them good. The *MouseMan Cordless* is expected to be on-sale by February and has a suggested retail price of $199. It is possible that the cordless mouse is derived from research and development on the 3-D mouse that the company has not officially announced, but is expected to be a metaphor for the expensive "datagloves" used with some prohibitively expensive government and commercial applications. According to one **Logitech** executive, cordless peripherals will be very important to the future of computing.

They'll See what I Tell Them to See (Editing)

One of the most fascinating trends in 1991 will be the use of multiple camera angles with ability to edit the footage gathered thereby together into a coherent whole, whether it imitates broadcast or film media.

Such features are expected to particularly illuminate the sports and simulation



MouseMan cordless radio mouse by Logitech

genre during 1991 and into early 1992. Already seen in the innovative VCR feature (the "Look, Honey" replay feature, not to be confused with the VCR-style game controls used in many of **Dynamix**'s products) to be found in **Dynamix**'s *Red Baron* product (see *CGW* #75) and **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Stunt Driver*, several products will use a similar feature in whole or in part.

Spectrum HoloByte's *Falcon 3.0* will continue the tradition by allowing players to save a tactical replay of their mission to disk. It allows a "realistic" military debriefing and is expected to allow players to choose from chase plane, satellite, wing man, missile, target, up top and ground views, as well as the traditional front, right and rear views, when creating the save file. The "up top" perspective solves a perennial problem with combat flight simulators. Pilots keep their eyes on the other plane during a dogfight. Lacking this ability, computer pilots have not really been able to track their enemy in a proper metaphor.



Spectra's Sting-Ray ergonomic joystick

Activision's *Death or Glory*, being developed by veteran British developer **Vektor Graphics**, will not only feature 76 years of air combat (allowing pilots to fly Fokker triplanes, Spitfires, F-86s, F-16s and more) and twelve missions in six historical geographical areas (World Wars I & II, Korea, Vietnam, Falklands and Syria), but will offer a movie editor feature that will allow the simulator's pilots to edit several flights together into a "film" file that he/she can pass along to a friend.

Origin's mega-hit *Wing Commander* has already begun to spawn add-on products (see "The Rumor Bag" in this issue), but *Wing Commander II* will add a VCR-style editor that will allow players to "tape" their missions and edit them together into a visual account of their prowess.

On the sports front, **Bethesda Softworks** and **Mirage Graphics**, creators of *Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2* and *Earl Weaver Baseball* respectively, are working on a college basketball simulation with a three-dimensional perspective and ability to use different camera angles to select instant replays. To some degree, this has already appeared in **Electronic Arts**'s *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation* (which foreshadowed this phenomenon by allowing players to choose viewpoints for instant replay, but did not allow one to save the "footage"), and the tradition will continue in *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* game. Due in late 1991, the new racing simulation from **EA** will offer six camera angles for instant replay (as well as a "campaign game" where the player tries to find sponsors and win races from the sprints at J. C. Agajanian's Ascot Park through Formula I on a lifelike Detroit track), but no opportunity to save the replay files.

Konami's *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge* offers multiple angles, including the ability to view the crash from any other car involved in the collision. The game uses scaling bit-mapped graphics (similar to the technique used in *Wing Commander*) and allows players to race on eight different NASCAR tracks.

In much the same way, *Earl Weaver Baseball II* (Spring '91) will allow gamers to view its full-size players in replays from several television angles,

but not to save the footage. Also, **Bethesda Softworks** is working with **Mirage Graphics** (developers of *EWB*) on a Fall 1991 college basketball product that will allow multiple camera angles for the instant replays, as well.

One of the most fascinating uses of instant replay editing in sports simulations, however, is **Broderbund**'s new line of games developed in conjunction with **Distinctive Software, Inc.** of Vancouver. They are publishing the first two sports games in a series that will enable one to save and edit "footage" of sporting events in such a way as to simulate the control board of a television studio or remote broadcast van. *Sports Simulated Boxing* (late Spring) and *Sports Simulated Tennis* will not only feature a great replay feature, but the series breaks new technological ground. The games display polygon-filled digitized interpretations of filmed footage. This enables the movements of the on-screen characters to be extremely realistic, even though the "human" aspects look rather abstract. The games allow customized competitors using some simple "editor" features to create both the appearance and capabilities of the fighters.

Solitary Intelligence (Intelligence Routines)

A major improvement in artificial opponents can be found in *Earl Weaver Baseball II*. Working with the famous Baltimore Oriole manager, the designers developed a sixty-question quiz which serves to determine the managerial style of the artificial opponent. That way, even if one cannot manage every game on the schedule, "Earl," the computer manager, should be able to handle the game according to one's personal preferences.

Artificial "intelligence" serves another function in *Champions*' handling of non-player characters. The relationships between the player's superhero and the NPCs is entirely based on prior actions and attitudes which have been displayed by the hero toward the rest of the citizenry. There are algorithms throughout the code to enable the entire game to be "event driven," based on what has happened earlier. Player characters will even interact with NPCs using a real-time system that offers visual feedback as to how one is using his/her powers, skills and attitude.

Another set of "intelligence routines" is utilized for yet another purpose in *Wing Commander II*. Chris Roberts, designer of the game, suggests that this be called dynamic interaction. The game adjusts to the individual player, providing better balance than in the flagship of the series. Like **Microprose**'s *Civilization* (see "The Rumor Bag"), the company's *Darklands* product will probably require more time in creating "intelligence routines" than any other section of the game. The fantasy role-playing experience will use custom code for more non-combat activities than any previous game in the genre. This code will analyze a character's attributes, previous action, skills, and more in order to determine the success or failure of a given activity. It may bring an incredible new sense of realism to the idea of fantasy role-playing.

The More the Merrier (Multi-player Games)

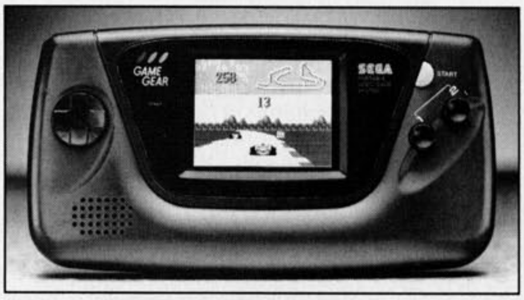
The cartridge game industry seems to be pushing designers into multi-player capabilities. Even though **Sega** has backed off their plans for a 1200-baud *Tele-Genesis* modem, they have made the *Game Gear* compatible for head-to-head play using a direct connect cable (*Gear-to-Gear*). **NEC** has already introduced the *TurboTap*, a connector which allows

up to five people to play at the same console in many of their games. *TV Sports: Football* already uses this technology and the rest of the "TV Sports" line, including the up-and-coming *TV Sports: Hockey* and *TV Sports: Baseball*. These titles should be available in the Fall of 1991. Both games will feature both league and exhibition play. As for the hockey game, it uses the most realistic, almost life-size approach to face-offs that we have yet seen in a hockey game and offers a computer opponent that will have at least 45 different offensive plays in its playbook. 1991's releases will bring the number of **NEC** games which work with multiple players (from 2-5) to a total of 12 titles.

In addition, NEC's Ken Wirt (Vice President for Home Entertainment) states that the company is developing a modem in their Japanese research division. Their desire is to create a potential not just for facilitating *TurboGrafx 16* to *TurboGrafx 16* competition, but even *TurboGrafx 16* to IBM PC capability. It is still in the research stage, however, and specific details on technology or launch date are still subject to change.

On the personal computer front, **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Falcon 3.0* is connectable for modem-to-modem, direct connect *and* network play. *Falcon 3.0* has been delayed until at least April of 1991 so that the company can support a sound board which will allow directional sound cues.

SSI talked briefly about their multi-



Sega's GameGear portable game machine

player *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*™ on-line game to be unveiled on **Quantum**'s *America Online* service by late spring or early summer. Since the program uses a graphic interface which looks visually like the games in the gold box series, the front end of the game system will require that it debut as PC specific. Entitled *NeverWinter Nights*, the adventure will take place in **TSR**'s *Forgotten Realms* world and will offer true multi-player gaming.

In person-to-person competitions that use the same keyboard or multiple joysticks/mice, players will experience sports games like the ones mentioned earlier from **Broderbund** and **Ubisoft**'s *Pro Tennis Tour II*. The latter has responded to criticisms that *Pro Tennis Tour* was too difficult and introduced a "junior" level. Up to four players can alternate in the simulated "tours" generated by the computer.

Two games which can be played at the same keyboard deserve special note.

Just as *Jones in the Fast Lane* attempted to draw non-computer gamers into the arena, *Lexi-Cross* from **Interplay** and *Lemmings* from **Psygnosis** seem to intrigue players of both sexes. In the latter, the cute little animations are combined with logic puzzles and real-time strategy. In *Lexi-Cross*, designer Peter Oliphant (whatever happens to those child television stars?) has introduced a word game with elements of *Wheel of Fortune*, *Concentration* and *Battleship*. The setting is a futuristic game show with a cyborg MC and the lovely "Robanna" to turn the tiles.

Multimedia Message

In terms of personal computer games, multimedia (use of digitized video input) is being experimented with on many different levels. Even without being stored on CD-ROM (the medium of choice for most multimedia products), many games are importing digitized static images as well as digitized film footage in their products. Like *Rise of the Dragon*, which used brief digitized film clips, many products offer limited experiments with the medium. *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* uses such a film clip for Mario to tutor the players and **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Falcon 3.0* uses multimedia film clips to enhance the atmosphere.

Accolade's *Conspiracy: The Deadlock Files* uses over 350 full-screen digitized pictures to advance the plot. The rationale for using the technique was to convey the idea that the story involved real people in real locations facing real combat on the streets of Manhattan. Alfred Hitchcock was the inspiration for this adventure where the protagonist awakes in a hotel bed with a dead body, and the hysterical maid discovers the corpse before he can dispose of it. International espionage and conspiracy weave an eerie sense of intrigue around the story (February release).

Capstone's *Trump Castle II* uses between forty and fifty full-screen digitized photos to set the scenes for their craps, roulette, blackjack, baccarat and poker games, designed for one to four players. They are expected to use a lot of the digitizing technique in *The Taking of Beverly Hills*, a movie license sometimes described as 1991's *Die Hard*. Capstone promises an adventure-oriented game, since they are moving away from publishing heavily action-oriented games.

Access has already utilized digitized video in many of their "interactive movie" games and they expect to do more with the medium. Expect an interesting announcement later in the spring, however. Meanwhile, expect **Access** to join with

(Continued on page 37)

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Terror of the Thunder Lizards

Origin's The Savage Empire

by Dennis Owens



I dream of pteradons munching on natives, picking their teeth with the ribs of the dead. While other dinosaurs gather, attracted by the noise and the smell of the massacre, the various tribes argue. I have tried to warn them; they must work together, they must resolve their differences, but no one will listen. What does the outsider know? Let him take his magics and his friends, the one called Schweitzer and the other, Malone, and disappear back into the jungle from whence he came.

A fine solution, I decide as the tyrannosaurs approach. Clinging to their ridiculous ideologies. Not a one of the tribespeople is worth saving.

Except Aiela. She is beautiful and different. Intelligent. And lost. Maybe in danger.

I lift my knife from the backpack. Heft it in my hand. Stare at it, and sigh. I grip it tighter and plunge into the fray.

What I wouldn't give for an M-16.

The Savage Empire, by Lord British, Aaron Allston and Stephen Beeman, is the first of what **Origin** promises to be a series of CRPGs designed using the *Ultima VI* (or later, the latest *Ultima*) engine. Released under a "Worlds of Ultima" banner, the games will sport play similar to that in the *Ultima* storyline — with continents to explore, NPCs to recruit and interrogate, beasties to combat, objects to find and puzzles to solve. The difference in the series is that none of the games' fictions will have anything to do with Britannia. Instead, the games will feature science fiction, horror, espionage, etc. and will be released between each new *Ultima*. Because each *Ultima* will continue to be designed with all new graphics and game-play, each "Worlds of Ultima" release will also change, depending on the evolution of the *Ultimas*.

Thus, *The Savage Empire*, although sporting slightly different graphics (as would be required by the difference in game genre) and a few new bells and whistles, plays almost exactly like *Ultima VI*. This is both a blessing and, at the same time, somewhat worrisome.

Its fiction is pulled right out of the pulp adventure magazines of the '30s and '40s (indeed, the game's manual, called *Ultimate Adventures*, resembles said magazines and includes an extensive prologue of the game). Basically, the player's character, a rough, tough archaeologist/avatar-type, is pulled, via moonstone, to a world where thunder lizards, natives and humanoid-types walk the earth.

Separated from his friends, he meets friendly villagers, not-so-friendly villagers and creatures, as well as a beautiful femme fatale (who is subsequently kidnapped). The player character must, then, find his friends, the femme, a way back to his own time/world and, along the way, solve the sub-quests and various other situations which arise. Perhaps the most significant problem is one which dozens of natives (not to mention scores of western philosophers and billions of humans) have been unable to solve for themselves: how to get along with each other.

Luckily for the adventurer, however, the problem is a little more localized. It seems that the various factions have been set against each other; no one really knows why the others are enemies, but rumors about the enemies' atrocious behaviors abound. What does become clear (fairly early in the game), though, is that the different tribes must learn to disregard their differences and unite if all are to survive.

Seen as a fable for the modern age — which, after all, the pulp magazines frequently were fond of providing — the game's fiction holds up. Much like the most recent *Ultimas*, to which, of course, *The Savage Empire* must be compared, the game presents a sort of morality lesson within the confines of the gaming environment with a complexity which is unparalleled among current games (except, perhaps, for those in *Starflight* and *Starflight 2*).

The game's musical score, by George Sanger, is moody, evocative and uses **Origin**'s new *SoundTrax* (now *F/X*) sequencer (compatible with Roland, AdLib and Sound Blaster boards).

The Savage Empire also features a new technique by Origin in which special events are framed in their own windows. Mostly used simply to add local color and to advance the fiction of the game, the screens are, nonetheless, impressive visually and do enhance the sense of an active, vibrant world within the valley of Eodon.

Weapon and Armor List

Relative value of armor and weapons in descending potency.

Certain Weapons	Shields	Armor
Grenade	Kotl shields	Leather
Bamboo rifle	Shields of Krukk	Bark
Fire axe	Stegosaurus shields	Cloth
Obsidian sword	Leather shields	
Atl-atl	Bark shields	
2-handed hammer		
Axe		
Bow		
Spear		
Throwing axe		
Rock/metal hammer		

Various others (which don't all seem to work so well, but in a fight, even a stick is better than bare hands!)

Differences from the Earlier Games

TITLE:	The Savage Empire
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$69.95
DESIGNERS:	Stephen Beeman and Aaron Allston
PUBLISHER:	Origin Austin, TX

Although the valley may seem crowded with villages, townspeople and special locations, it is not really necessary to do extensive mapping beyond the careful notation on the map included with the game. Lists of the NPCs found in each village, along with a few key words from each conversation, more than sufficed for this reviewer's treks through the wilds. Dungeons are relatively small, so players will probably only need to map in the caves of the Myrmidex and in the maze in the southern end of the underground city of Kotl.



As would be expected, the natives' weapons are relatively crude (no glass swords or magic axes, alas). Well-educated (or informed) adventurers, however, might be able to find enough odds and ends to fashion more... efficient protection. Armor is also extremely crude, and not many types exist (see accompanying chart).

Gone, at least for this game, is the idea that anything lying around should not be picked up and used as needed. Perhaps this is because experienced avatar/archaeologists realize the temporal nature of ownership or perhaps, this is because necessity is the mother of picking up any ol' thing and using it. Of course, the most logical reason may be because the inhabitants of the valley of Eodon do not recognize the concept of possessions (making them susceptible to unethical outside-worlders [*dramatic jungle music here*]), no honor code exists here.

All Is Not Well In The Valley

For the most part, *The Savage Empire*'s graphics, depth of fiction, ease of play and soundtracks are all impressive and the change from the *Ultima* mythos is welcome. The game does, however, suffer from a few problems, most of them slight but, perhaps, indicative of larger issues at work in Origin's recent releases.

Disturbing, first of all, is that *The Savage Empire* does play so much like all the other *Ultimas*. Although once upon a time, *Ultima* stood for innovation and surprise (remember the NPC asking, "Do you know Blackthorne? No? Then, how can you judge him?"), the games — beginning shortly after that encounter in *Ultima V* — seem to have devolved into copies of themselves — all requiring that worlds be explored (often requiring zigzagging across continents and repeated visits to towns and numerous conversations with NPCs), monsters be bashed and objects be found (more zigzagging).

Yes, this reviewer realizes that the very fact that *The Savage Empire* is based on the *Ultima* gameplaying system will require a certain amount of similarity with the earlier games, but the recent changes made in the games do not *all* seem for the best.

Though it is understandable that commands, for instance, might need to be simplified for use with the mouse, what is not quite so clear is why, when, let us say, a torch is "used," the command box does not say that it has been "ignited." Another question that has not been understood by this reviewer is why, even though the graphics have been made more complex because of the ability of technology to differentiate between ever finer and finer images, objects *still* must be picked up, clicked on, or sifted through, *simply* to determine what they are. If a bowl of grapes is sitting on a table in a game so visually impressive and innovative, why can't one see that it is a bowl of grapes simply by looking at it with his own two eyes? This might not be true in the earlier *Ultimas*, but one wonders why it is not true, now.

Still another concern is the apparent movement by *Ultima*'s designers toward an ever simpler magic system. *The Savage Empire* features all of nine spells with such evocative names as "heal," light," "charm enemy" and six, well, basically, reagents (called "totems" and "offerings") — *all* of which are readily available practically anywhere. Although each village features a shaman who, supposedly, is the only villager capable of using such magics, it is hard to understand why, given the abundance of magical offerings and the ease with which certain natural berries and roots can be converted into their purer, more magical forms, each tribesman cannot simply heal himself or summon his own animals (easy way to have rabbit stew for supper). The need for the shaman is never fully justified or explained in the game. Those guys must have some kind of union.

It is just such inconsistencies, such indications that the games have not been as well thought through as the others have been, that weaken the charm and playability of what has been such a brilliantly designed gaming structure. Really, the only fair point of comparison with the *Ultima* system is with itself. Perhaps, no other system comes close to its length of existence, complexity, depth of fiction and clever characterization of NPC personalities. It is likely that no other system matches its attempts to reach beyond the machine and gameplaying sensibilities toward the acknowledgement that something more important exists than reflex action, monster-bashing or any of the other dozens of computer-game cliches.

It is in that comparison with itself that *The Savage Empire* strains. The stresses of years of success have begun to show. Make no mistake; compared to any except its own brothers and sisters, *The Savage Empire*, despite its niggling problems (which show only because of the brilliance with which the entire line shines), must be considered dazzling and successful. Compared to its peers, however, the game presents what may be a disturbing view of a possible trend in the *Ultima* line: caricature. **CGW**

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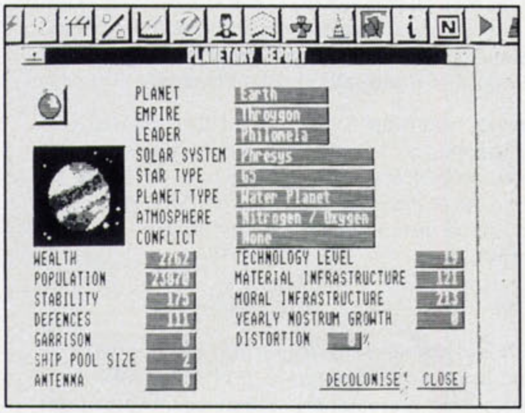
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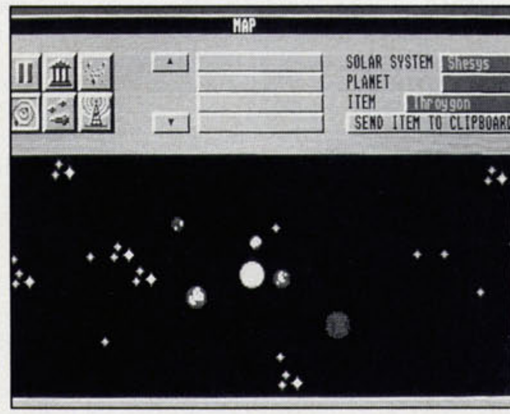
Megalomaniacs Welcome

Electronic Arts' Imperium

by Hosea Battles, Jr.

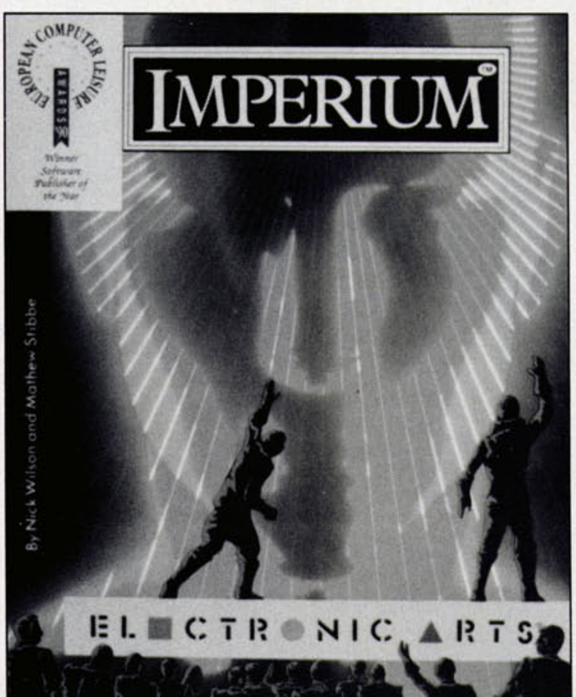


TITLE:	Imperium
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
REVIEWED:	Atari ST
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Matthew Stibbs and Nick Wilson
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA



The goals are as vast as space itself. Players attempt to: a) rule the entire galaxy and b) live forever. Since the fiction of the game includes the discovery and manufacture of the anagathic (life-preserving) drug, Nostrum, this is not as impossible as it sounds. The catch is that Nostrum must be obtained by constantly conquering and colonizing new planets. Since four other emperors need the same drug to control *their* empires, the game becomes a sophisticated amalgam of political, military and economic concerns.

Initially, the player is inaugurated as Earth's emperor in the year 2020 and "elected" for a 50-year term. One will have to be sensitive to the realities involved in reaching that magic 50% mark necessary to be re-elected, while trying to either conquer every known planet or simply stay alive for 1,000 game years. If one loses his/her re-election bid, dies of old age or is overthrown during a *coup-d'etat*, the game is over. The latter is a particularly nasty way to lose, since the program rubs the loss in with a vivid graphic portraying one's bloody head hanging from the hands of the victorious successor.



Strangely enough, especially for games developed on a 16-bit machine, all of *Imperium*'s graphics (except for the map screen) are in black and white. The map screen provides a rotating galaxy view in color. Other displays are limited to windows showing still shots of characters' faces, planetary perspectives and views of space combat. Fortunately, the game offers enough depth of play (the 68-page manual is *not* for "show") to partially overcome its graphic limitations, even on graphically intense machines like the Atari ST or Amiga.

Cosmic Control (Game Mechanics)

Political, military and economic functions are all interwoven in *Imperium*. As would be expected, one administrator cannot rule the galaxy alone. It takes subordinates. One must pay, promote and protect one's subordinates (whether military or civilian) in order to insure their loyalty. The emperor *does* have an "ace in the hole," however, since he/she controls the life-protracting drug Nostrum. Access to the drug can be used as an incentive for loyalty and denial of access as a punishment for disloyalty. This method may seem cruel, but it is certainly effective.

In addition to handling one's own sub-administrators, the player's character is forced to negotiate with the four computer-controlled empires in matters of trade, military alliances and, of course, war. To make matters as "interesting" as possible, the computer opponents are as devious as human opponents and will not hesitate to break a military or trade alliance whenever it is to their advantage. Surprise attacks are not uncommon and human emperors will need to watch their backs just as though they were playing *Machiavelli* or *Diplomacy* with human opponents. One consolation is that they will turn on each other, as well.

Economic considerations are rather straightforward. Players make decisions with regard to trading twenty different commodities and subsidizing the planetary economies from the Imperial Treasury. The latter enables a

planet to increase its technology level, generate planetary defenses or rebuild its infrastructure. Reconstruction is often necessary after certain random events, such as crop failures, meteor impacts and xenomorph invasions (in addition to those from other empires), occur.

Although colonization is *also* straightforward in *Imperium*, this is not revealed until deep into the manual. All players need to know is that planets are colonized by dropping troops onto an empty planet. This may seem intuitive to some players since one simply drops troops onto inhabited planets in order to try to conquer those planets. In the case of a previously inhabited planet, the fleets (space navy) will attack both the planetary defenses and bombard the planet in order to soften it up. Then, combat between the garrison and the attackers must be resolved. Note that success will require an overwhelming force of attackers, since the chances are that the computer will try to retake the planet if there is an insufficient number of survivors to garrison the planet effectively.

Inferior Technology (Problems)

The ST version of the game has a bug related to the sound. First, the only sound that one hears is digitized piano music at the opening screen and whenever there are message screens. However, should one be playing the game *with* the sound toggled on, the game will freeze up on various message screens. There is no problem if the player toggles the sound option off, however.

In all the versions, there is a strange phenomenon with regard to loyalty. Characters within the game are rated for their loyalty with regard to the emperor. However, one can even become "disloyal" to oneself. In fact, this reviewer even managed to become ruler of the galaxy with a disloyal and incompetent main character. So, the anomaly doesn't really affect play. It just looks strange.

Superior Strategy

The quickest way to learn the game is to allow the computer-controlled subordinates to handle all of the economic and political decision-making responsibilities for about the first ten years of game play. If one watches what the computer is doing and emulates those activities effectively throughout the rest of the game, one should have a reasonably profitable reign.

Ultimately, however, one must totally annihilate the enemy. This is best accomplished by locating the enemy's home planet and invading it with an overwhelming force. Once the home planet is conquered, all the enemy's planets become one's own and enemy fleets will bé automatically converted into resources for the "good" empire.

Analysis

Although the production values of *Imperium* are not what would be expected in an American game, it offers excellent gameplay. No two games are alike and the computer functions as a reasonably intelligent and unpredictable opponent. Due to its strategic complexity and depth of play, it is certain to give any strategy gamer plenty of hours of enjoyment. **CGW**

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Good Nukes, Tonight

Part Two of a Command HQ *Replay*

By Alan Emrich

Caracas "Red" Player: Alan Emrich
Belgrade "Blue" Player: Dennis Lytton

The following is the conclusion of a Command HQ *replay begun in* CGW *#79. To update: When World War IV broke out in 2023, blue forces had prepared for a lightning war by building tanks and airplanes with which to make quick strikes into the Middle East and red's ally, Russia. With blue successful up to this point, red launched a nuclear strike in desperation, targetted against overpowering blue tank forces in northern Russia. The political consequences to red were vast, but red stuck by its plan to conquer the United States and commence operations in the Pacific.*

Turns 61-142, Opportunities Lost

With the sudden shift in the balance of power, everything depended upon Belgrade's swiftness in seizing the opportunities created by the new neutral powers and defecting red forces. Blue began by scraping together the remainder of its forces in Russia, and pushing on to Novosibirsk in central Siberia (where, ironically, nothing had changed). Unfortunately for blue, the red hordes of Caracas were still waiting there, only now in strength.

Meanwhile, the state of the "Red Empire of the Americas" had reached crisis proportions for top planners in Caracas, leading into a "reconquest" campaign. Swiftly, the two defecting subs in the Atlantic were hunted down by red's three remaining loyal submarines (by turn 86), replaying a scene straight out of *Hunt for Red October*. By turn 70, red forces were hitting the beaches of Japan and keeping Siberia from turning "blue."

During these crucial twenty turns after the first use of a nuclear strike (turns 60-80), the war began to turn. Blue let go the opportunity to support the "Indian Civil War" caused by one of the two infantry units stationed in Bombay defecting. With the impressive blue forces sitting in the Persian Gulf and Middle East, intervention was not dispatched until after red had already re-secured India. Instead, Belgrade slowly mobilized a striking force around turn 86 which would not complete the subjugation of India until turn 129. The cost in time was high and the brief window of opportunity in the subcontinent slammed down on blue's slow-moving fingers.

By now, red's "Atlantic Wall" of submarines was shattered. Blue could have raided almost anywhere along the western hemisphere's eastern seaboard with impunity, but the invasion never came. Not even a sneak raid. *(Again, red's plans and prepared defenses went out the window, but blue did not seize upon this opportunity. Given the time to recover, red regained its balance and continued to build up offensive forces.)*

Red was using this gift of precious time granted by blue's inactivity to forge the "Hawaiian Hammer," a strike force designed to head through the Pacific, across the Indian Ocean, up the Red Sea, across the Mediterranean and on to Yugoslavia. By turn 110, the force consisted of three tank armies, one infantry army, two cruisers and a submarine, but a new carrier (built in Saigon) would link up at the first objective, Sydney.

Ironically, on turn 124, red sent out its Atlantic wolfpack from Boston to Iceland just as, on turn 127, blue mobilized a fleet in the North Atlantic and launched an attack on Norway. The race was on for control of the North Sea while blue was finishing off resistance in India. By turn 129, India had fallen and the blue navy was then dispatched to south-east Asia.

Turns 143-208, The Tide Turns

Without warning, the "Hawaiian Hammer" fell. Since Sydney was ungarrisoned, a lone armor unit took the city, keeping the size of the red force a virtual secret. (Sydney's capture could easily be rationalized by blue as another nuisance "sneak raid.") Aware of this, Caracas sent the task force into the Indian ocean by travelling *south of* Australia, rather than through the more exposed northern waters, in order to preserve the secret. The next stop was to be Diego Garcia (a small, but crucial, base located in the central Indian Ocean).

By turn 148 in the North Sea, the red wolfpack was waiting to blood the blue navy off Iceland and Norway. By turn 157, it had devoured that blue navy. Immediately, Belgrade launched the war's second nuclear attack on the concentrated elements of the red submarine force. Yet the consequences of this second nuke of the war were minimal (two red submarines were destroyed, France defected from blue to neutrality and a pivotal blue tank in the Middle East switched allegiance to red on the spot), such that by turn 160, blue's Norwegian reconquest campaign was completely called off.

The rogue red tank which appeared in Saudi Arabia after the nuclear attack began to overrun oilfields, one by one. Belgrade dispatched three tank armies from India to the desert. This left the "jewel of the English crown" vulnerable, just as the Hawaiian Hammer was beginning to approach. Although blue did recall the fleet from Southeast Asia back to the Persian Gulf, it remained to be seen whether it would arrive on time to shatter the Hawaiian Hammer.

On turn 183, an ungarrisoned Diego Garcia fell in an instant. So the red hammer lost no time in pushing on into India. With red's Middle Eastern tank army neutralized on this turn, however, blue forces could have been freed for India's defense. Yet they failed to move quickly enough to do so.

Red won yet another naval battle on turn 188. This victory, southwest of Bombay, cleared the way for the red hammer to strike another decisive blow. Although a rogue blue sub played sniper and managed to kill a tank unit being transported, red sank the sub. Next, in keeping with red's strategy of "starting more fires than the other guy can put out" (i.e., beginning more local offensives than the opponent can deal with), red launched an attack on China from Japan during turn 200. This diversion was quickly smothered in blue velvet, however, when a blue fleet turned back the red invaders.

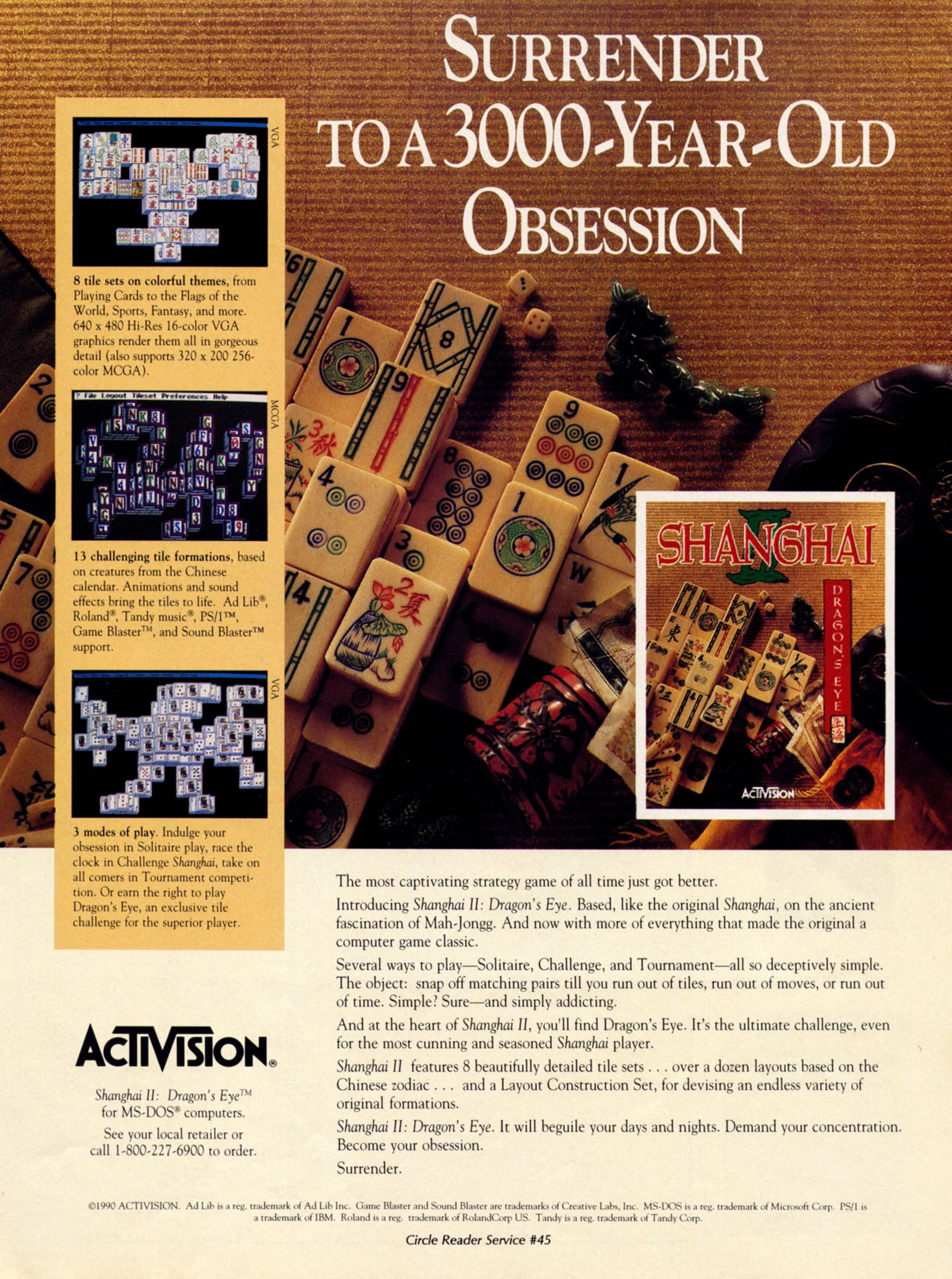
By turn 208, though, India was flattened by the red hammer. Red forces rested and repaired in Bombay, gradually regaining their strength and being dispersed to new locations. This dispersal of units was necessary because of the blue satellite surveillance. Caracas knew that if too many units were seen concentrated together in Bombay, the red forces could expect to experience another true blue nuke. Concentration of forces is good for battle, but the worst thing possible for nuclear defense.

Turns 209-355, Closing The Ring

Initiative lapsed by both sides until turn 225 when the red navy left the Indian ocean to commence bombarding the blue armies of the Middle East. Twenty turns later, another red invasion of China was launched from Japan, but this time with naval support. Red was not only victorious at sea, but had converted China, appropriately enough, into a crimson palette within twenty turns. Then the remaining units from the Chinese offensive were instantly ordered to join their Hawaiian Hammer, resting in Bombay.

Before the Middle East erupted, Caracas initiated a meltdown in central Siberia. The red army in Novosibirsk began marching

(Continued on page 35)


SURRENDER TO A 3000-YEAR-OLD OBSESSION
VGA
8 tile sets on colorful themes, from Playing Cards to the Flags of the World, Sports, Fantasy, and more. 640 x 480 Hi-Res 16-color VGA graphics render them all in gorgeous detail (also supports 320 x 200 256-color MCGA).
MCGA
13 challenging tile formations, based on creatures from the Chinese calendar. Animations and sound effects bring the tiles to life. Ad Lib®, Roland®, Tandy music®, PS/1™, Game Blaster™, and Sound Blaster™ support.
VGA
3 modes of play. Indulge your obsession in Solitaire play, race the clock in Challenge Shanghai, take on all comers in Tournament competition. Or earn the right to play Dragon's Eye, an exclusive tile challenge for the superior player.
SHANGHAI II
DRAGON'S EYE
ACTIVISION
The most captivating strategy game of all time just got better.
Introducing Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye. Based, like the original Shanghai, on the ancient fascination of Mah-Jongg. And now with more of everything that made the original a computer game classic.
Several ways to play—Solitaire, Challenge, and Tournament—all so deceptively simple. The object: snap off matching pairs till you run out of tiles, run out of moves, or run out of time. Simple? Sure—and simply addicting.
And at the heart of Shanghai II, you'll find Dragon's Eye. It's the ultimate challenge, even for the most cunning and seasoned Shanghai player.
Shanghai II features 8 beautifully detailed tile sets . . . over a dozen layouts based on the Chinese zodiac . . . and a Layout Construction Set, for devising an endless variety of original formations.
Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye. It will beguile your days and nights. Demand your concentration. Become your obsession.
Surrender.
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Circle Reader Service #45

See Reader Input Device on page 60

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

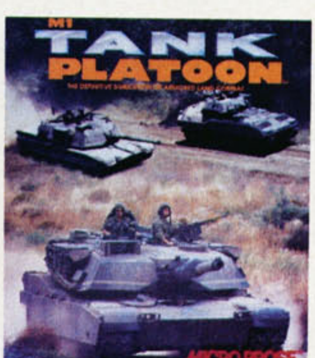
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Wing Commander*	*Origin*	*AC*	*61*	*10.98*
2.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*AC, SI*	*101*	*10.45*
3.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*MicroProse*	*ST*	*74*	*10.43*
4.	*Secret of Monkey Island*	*LucasFilm*	*AD*	*23*	*9.87*
5.	*Ultima VI*	*Origin*	*RP*	*67*	*9.77*
6.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*ST, SI*	*129*	*9.67*
7.	*Wings*	*Cinemaware*	*AC*	*32*	*9.66*
8.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*WG*	*69*	*9.65*
9.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicroProse*	*SI,WG*	*70*	*9.60*
10.	*Silent Service II*	*MicroProse*	*SI*	*45*	*9.41*

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	MechWarrior	Activision	SI,RP	52	9.29
12.	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG	37	9.18
13.	Populous	EA	ST	115	9.13
14.	Hero's Quest	Sierra	AD,RP	54	9.12
15.	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	74	9.09
16.	Buck Rogers	SSI	AD	86	9.07
17.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	AC,SI	86	9.05
18.	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	23	9.04
19.	Ultima V	Origin	RP	95	9.03
20.	Wasteland	EA	RP	119	9.01
	Lords of the Rising Sun	Cinemaware	AC,ST	53	9.01
22.	Second Front	SSI	WG	37	9.00
23.	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	34	8.97
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	45	8.97
25.	Romance of the Three Kingdoms	Koei	ST,RP	31	8.96
26.	Overrun	SSI	WG	24	8.93
27.	Battle Chess II	Interplay	ST	22	8.91
28.	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	62	8.90
29.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	RP	30	8.87
	NFL Challenge	XOR	ST	86	8.87
	Starflight 2	EA	RP	63	8.87
32.	Indianapolis 500	EA	SI	29	8.86
33.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	RP	54	8.81
34.	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	AC	25	8.80
	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	43	8.80
36.	Project Stealth Fighter	MicroProse	SI	29	8.79
37.	Bard's Tale III	EA	RP	54	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	RP	48	8.77
	Ishido	Accolade	ST	20	8.77
	Leisure Suit Larry III	Sierra	AD	47	8.77
41.	Airborne Ranger	MicroProse	AC	74	8.76
	Bandit Kings of Ancient China	Koei	ST,RP	28	8.75
43.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	30	8.73
44.	Jack Nicklaus Unlimited	Accolade	ST	26	8.73
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	62	8.72
46.	Action Stations	Conflict Analytics	WG	22	8.71
47.	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	29	8.71
	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	33	8.70
49.	Nuclear War	New World	ST	41	8.70
	Secret of the Silver Blades	SSI	RP	47	8.70
51.	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	58	8.69
52.	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	70	8.67
53.	Sword of the Samurai	MicroProse	ST,RP	40	8.67
	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	43	8.67
55.	Ishido	Accolade	ST	32	8.66

Top 100 Games

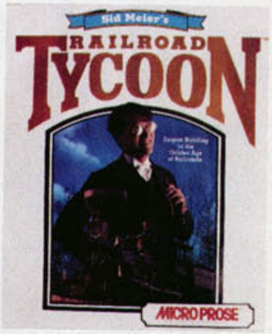
THE HALL OF FAME

The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

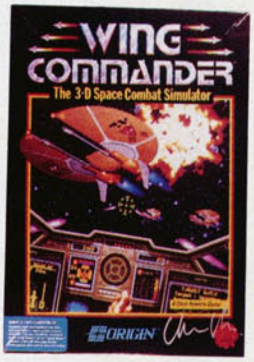
Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
56	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	20	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Software Tlwks	ST	44	8.65
	Indy Jones & the Last Crusade Adventure	LucasFilm	AD	29	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	AC	31	8.65
60.	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	36	8.62
61.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	116	8.61
62.	Champions of Krynn	SSI	RP	65	8.60
63.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	58	8.59
64.	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	34	8.54
	It Came From the Desert	Cinemaware	AD	36	8.54
66.	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	24	8.53
67.	Carrier Command	MicroPlay	AC,WG	49	8.51
	DeathTrack	Activision	AC	29	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	68	8.51
70.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	AD	31	8.42
71.	TV Sports Football	Cinemaware	AC,ST	50	8.39
72.	Wings of Fury	Broderbund	AC	52	8.38
73.	Strike Fleet	EA	WG	79	8.37
74.	Fire Brigade	Panther	WG	30	8.34
75.	Rocket Ranger	Cinemaware	AC,ST	75	8.32
76.	Modem Wars	EA	WG	24	8.29
	Police Quest II	Sierra	AD	39	8.29
	TV Sports Basketball	Cinemaware	AC,ST	33	8.29
79.	688 Attack Sub	EA	SI,ST	59	8.27
	Drakkhen	Data East	RP	32	8.27
81.	Flight of the Intruder	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	25	8.26
82.	SimCity Terrain	Maxis	ST	24	8.25
	Manhunter	Sierra	AD	72	8.25
84.	Centurion	EA	ST	49	8.24
85.	Police Quest	Sierra	AD	98	8.23
86.	Starglider II	Rainbird	AC	65	8.22
87.	Jack Nicklaus 18 Holes	Accolade	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cinemaware	AC	68	8.21
89.	Leisure Suit Larry II	Sierra	AD	52	8.20
90.	Loom	LucasFilm	AD	38	8.18
91.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	AC,SI	31	8.16
92.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	AD	28	8.14
93.	Tetris	SpectrumHolobyte	AC,ST	46	8.13
94.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	SI	46	8.12
	Conquests of Camelot	Sierra	AD	33	8.12
	Vette!	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	26	8.12
97.	Shiloh: Grant's Trial	SSI	WG	54	8.09
98.	Star Control	Accolade	AC,ST	38	8.09
99.	Knights of Legend	Origin	RP	26	8.08
100.	Speedball	Cinemaware	AC	35	8.06

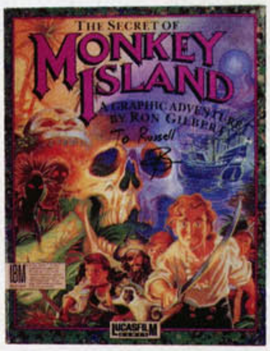
Top Strategy



Top Action



Top Adventure



Top Wargame



Return To A World of Loyalty and Honor




Opening Screen


Making an Alliance


Battlefield

Nobunaga's Ambition II, a best seller in Japan, is now available for IBM PC/Compatibles and Nintendo!

Misplaced loyalties in the feudal era of Japan often proved fatal. The mighty Japanese hero Oda Nobunaga sought an end to generations of bloody conflict between the warring states of his country. Tragically, his dream of unifying Japan ended when he was betrayed and murdered by his own general. It's your turn now to become a 16th century warlord and fulfill Nobunaga's ambition!

Command over 400 distinct Samurai characters - each with separate personalities and goals. A Samurai will pledge his sword and honor to your cause, but can he be trusted?

Enhanced battle scenarios include Siege warfare, where you must storm the castle gates, swim the moat or scale the castle walls. In Field warfare, the tactics are Charge, Ambush and Surprise. You can even catch the enemy off guard by a night attack!

If your character falls in battle, the war continues with your chosen successor. With strikingly detailed graphics, this simulation of Japan's Civil War Era is more realistic than ever before!

- Two scenarios, five levels of difficulty.
- 1 to 4 players
- 38 unique battlemaps and castles.
- Interact with over 400 Samurai characters.
- New HEX battle features Night and Siege warfare.
- Not copy protected.
- Full color map/poster.



Bandit Kings of Ancient China - The evil minister Gao Qiu has usurped the command from the throne. The righteous followers of the emperor have been exiled as outlaws. Join these heroic rebels in your mission to overthrow a wicked empire, and restore the might to the throne. *Available for NES, PC, Amiga and Macintosh.*



Romance of the Three Kingdoms - As a Warlord of the 2nd century China, you must restore a shattered Empire. Gather the bravest warriors of the land to build up your armies. Use strength and strategy to destroy your enemies and claim the power to govern all of China. *Available for NES, PC and Amiga.*



Genghis Khan - Become the greatest warrior the world has known. Through battles and allegiances, forge the mighty Mongol Horde. With armies at your command, the empires of the world are tempting targets. Fight bravely to achieve the ultimate goal of world conquest. *Available for NES, PC and Amiga.*

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Good Nukes...

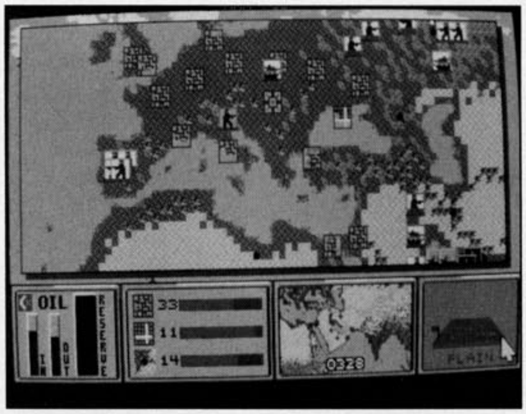
(Continued from page 30)

toward Moscow on turn 270. Two blue tank units managed to slow the red lava flow in the Ural mountains, but not for long.

Sensing the threat from the east, Belgrade began to quickly mobilize forces in western Russia. On turn 275, both sides launched sneak raids against each other in northern Russia, blue against Leningrad, red against Gorky.

At the same time, the red hammer began to steam towards the oilfields of the Middle East. By turn 285, Oman fell. Caracas decided to open new fronts by committing the western hemisphere's defensive garrisons to an attack on Spain. The sail across the Atlantic ocean would be long, but worth the trip to threaten Belgrade from its western compass point. By turn 300, Saudi Arabia had been secured and, on turn 324, Madrid, Spain, fell to the red garrisons from the west.

Finally, on turn 327, a nuclear attack on the red navies in the Persian Gulf came out of the "blue." Again, France defected, but that was the only consequence of this desperate nuclear attack from a crumbling empire. Still, with red armies advancing from Spain, the defection of France at this



Spain falls to red, but blue drops a nuke in the Persian Gulf (lower right).

particular time was ill fortune indeed for blue's western defenses. On turn 335, red launched a three-pronged offensive on Belgrade from Spain, the Middle East and Russia. On turn 336, France and Kuwait fell. Red forces from the north in Iceland and Norway launched a fourth prong to the Belgrade campaign from the north, besieging the enemy capital from every point on the compass. By turn 351 Iraq fell, and then Hamburg. On turn 355, blue finally conceded defeat.

Epilogue

The red forces of Caracas planned for and succeeded in conducting a long war of attrition and slow maneuvering. Belgrade's blue blitzkrieg was blunted on the steppes of Russia and suffered lethargy in the Middle East and India. It was a long war, but in the end it was a test of skills and wills. To the victor, goes the spoils.

Strategic Tips in Review for *Command HQ*

1. Keep garrisons around isolated areas. Not only do they help discourage and defeat nuisance military "sneak raids," as illustrated in this replay, but they also prevent *political* sneak raids. A "political sneak raid" is when one player has at least 30 billion to spend, he goes in a "buys" a one-city area twice (once to turn it neutral, and once to woo it to his side), then buys an infantry unit to immediately garrison it from attacks. The possibilities have to be imagined for the true creative uses of this type of sneak attack to work, although it is very expensive.

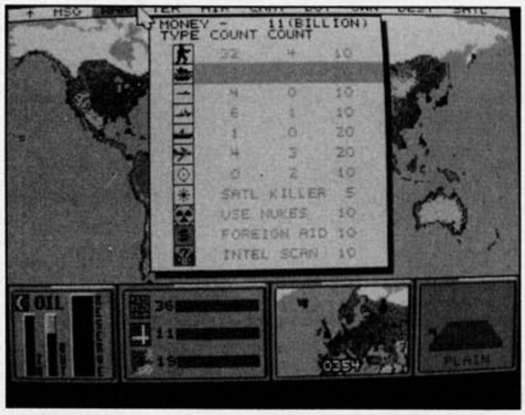
2. Use submarines to secure naval "flanks." They should be in a stationary "ring" around the waterways to be protected. Since they are virtually invisible

until they attack, they can sit and wait for warships to go by while the transports sail behind, begging for destruction. It takes a nervy player, however, to show the restraint in not closing the ring on the warships and waiting for the transports.

3. Don't drop the first nuke. If you have to drop it to stop an enemy ground offensive in your once allied territory, you'll practically end the game (especially if there is urban destruction involved). The safest nukes are dropped at sea, where expensive carriers (with planes) can be dispatched relatively cheaply.

4. Gaining air superiority is cheaper in the beginning of war than trying to seize it later on. This is because a force with several air units can keep bombing an airbase or the units near it, calling the defending plane(s) into the air in response. These defending planes then become "unavailable" and highly vulnerable to being shot down. A person with lots of available airplanes can play the odds of destroying an enemy thusly.

5. Keep checking to see what the opponent can see. Then, use surprise to obtain victories. The "equals" key **is** the "key to victory." By knowing what one's opponent *doesn't* (particularly about your troop dispositions), one can readily turn that knowledge into a ready advantage. Speaking of "intelligence," never forget that



Balance of forces at game end (red in column 1, blue in column 2).

it is quicker and cheaper to destroy an enemy satellite than for him to replace it!

6. Strike forces win wars, so wage war offensively. Even when conducting a "defensive" campaign, a player must judiciously use reserves to counterattack and stabilize the situation. The only way to win a game of *Command HQ* is to capture the enemy's capital. Striking at it, at some point, is the only way to do this. If one can build up enough of a reserve so that a "club" is available to "wield," then that's how the job will get done best.

7. Defend with infantry. Attack with tanks and planes. This sounds sensible enough, but it is amazing how many times one sees tanks and planes on garrison duty or infantry leading the charge. The naval counterpart to this point is equally valid. Carriers are for attacking, subs for defending, and cruisers can perform either duty equally well.

8. Never forget the *true* value of armor over infantry. Many people make the mistake of not launching offensives with *any* armor, because having "twice as much" infantry is their preference. Armor, however, has incredible advantages on offense, such as:

- moving twice as fast as infantry and making it less likely that the defender will be able to reinforce;
- infiltrating behind infantry in order to get flanking shots while enemy units are facing the wrong way (and no longer damaging the flanking armor units);
- repairing faster than infantry;
- retreating faster and surviving better than other front line units; and
- hitting harder than other combat units in a land assault. **CGW**

Economics...

(Continued from page 22)

Britannica and at least two other computer game publishers in releasing CD-ROM versions identical to their popular games. Why would consumers want CD-ROM games with little or nothing added to the original program? They would *not* have to install to the hard disk, storage space would be minimal and documentation could either be on-disk for printing *or* digitized with voice-over tutorials and, later, "hot key" help sequences.

Cinemaware will release *Enemy Within* in early summer, a true interactive movie using digitized video, an original musical score and a professionally crafted script to tell the story. Instead of having an on-screen character to portray the player's alter-ego, the other characters in the story talk directly to the front of the screen. This perspective creates a suspended disbelief that reinforces the idea that the on-screen personas are talking to the player. In accordance with **Cinemaware** tradition, action sequences are still required in order to complete the story successfully.

Meanwhile, **Sierra** continues to work on multimedia versions of their successful graphic adventures, including *King's Quest V* and *Space Quest IV*. These games will feature additional speech and animation compared to the floppy disk versions. Also, they will each contain a different language on the CD, whether Japanese, Italian, Spanish or German.

Psygnosis unveiled *Dawnscape*, a work in progress for the **NEC** CD-ROM player and **Commodore**'s *CDTV*. Some of this product has the look of a claymation-style movie, but the company is using ray-tracing, three-dimensional modeling and fractal-generated graphics to give a hot special effects feel at 30 frames per second. The game is still 18 months to two years away.

ICOM is nearing completion of *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*, an interactive strategy game which uses digitized video to tell the story. It is due in late first quarter for **NEC**'s *TurboGrafx 16*.

Commodore is still citing *CDTV* as coming RSN (real soon now) and unveiled good news to Amiga 500 owners, as well. Whereas the price point for CDTV is still expected to be circa $1,000, Amiga 500 owners can purchase a CDTV adaptor for around $700 by mid-year. Besides being able to play CDTV and CD+G compact discs, the players are expected to play the announced CD + MIDI standard that allows users to accompany recording artists by keyboard or microphone and to play many of the Macintosh-based multimedia products like *The Magic Flute*. Meanwhile, *TV Sports: Football*, *Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf* and *Battlechess* all are nearing completion in CDTV-compatible form. If the *Battlechess* product on CDTV has the same kinds of animations and sound cues (the music changes depending on one's position in the game and you can get a voice-plus-animation tutorial on elementary chess), it will be extremely popular.

CD-ROM on the **Sega** Genesis is still at least one year away. Al Nilson, director of marketing, insists that **Sega** never officially announced a CD-ROM product, but noted that the Japanese R & D department was working on it. He suggested that it might appear in Japan in 1991, but posited 1992 as the earliest possible appearance in the U.S. Even then, he cautioned that the drive will have to cost under $400 and offer plenty of good games before it will come to market.

Circle Reader Service #56

The Time is Now (Real-Time Features)

Another trend in computer games relates to the use of real-time action and resolution in several different genres. Several games under development are attempting to experiment with different types of combat. In **Mindcraft**'s *The Magic Candle II* (due in mid-to-late Second Quarter), players choose a leader from the player characters in the adventuring party. Each character has its own leadership style and orders will be given by the artificial intelligence routines of the player characters. In addition, new features like Loyalty and Bravery (which are constantly re-rated based on previous actions) play a very important role in this game. No reflex action is required in the combats; one's success is based on character management. Also, the company plans to officially preview *Siege*, a real-time strategy game based on conquering and defending medieval castles, at Summer CES. The enemies are different kinds of fantasy creatures.

Hero Productions is currently working on the *Champions* computer game series. Originally announced by **Miles Computing** in June, 1990, the license has reverted to Steve Peterson. The action in this game will be real-time and, like the combat in *The Magic Candle II*, will not require "twitch and flex" gyrations. The "targeting" of enemies and basic tactical commands will be handled as in a simulation, but one's success or failure in the game will ultimately depend on wise use of the player character's (i.e. superhero's) attributes and skills.

Darklands, hopefully the first in a trio of fantasy role-playing games with an historical slant from **Microprose**, will also use real-time combat which can be interrupted by a key press. Then, players can select commands from a menu or enter commands directly from the keyboard. The main difference between this real-time combat and that in *Pirates!* or *Sword of the Samurai* is that *attributes* determine the results of combat, not "twitch and flex" action sequences.

Simulators have utilized the "real-time" idea for years, but **Psygnosis** is adding a new wrinkle in *Armourgeddon*. This three-dimensional combat simulation will allow players to build the weapon systems/delivery system of their choice and simultaneously fight a tank versus a plane head-to-head or against the computer opponent.

Another game with real-time resolution is **Virgin Mastertronic**'s *Space Shuttle* (developed by **Vektor Graphics**). Although simulations are "real-time" by definition, this incredibly detailed simulation does everything from launch check to landing in real-time. Fortunately, the program allows players to pause the real-time analog from time to time so that they can take some time to explore the detailed environment (complete with accurate physics and correct placement of the constellations) or advance time in such a way they don't have to spend three or four literal days in space to complete a mission. It looks like a tremendous learning experience.

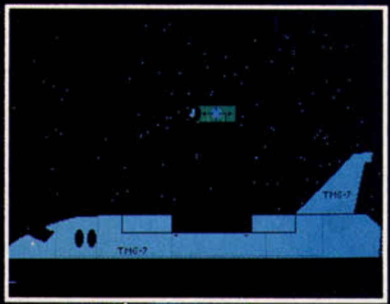
The Magic of Merlin

Fireworks popped and dry ice "smoke" filled the arena. King Arthur's Tournament was reaching a climax. *CGW*'s report on the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, however, is just beginning. Next month, a genre-by-genre look at some of the most exciting games expected to appear in 1991. **CGW**

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Circle Reader Service #38 »

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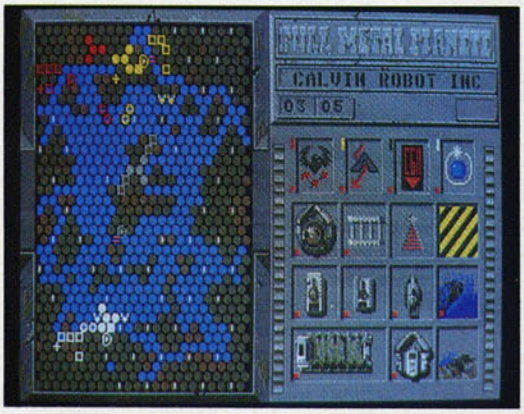
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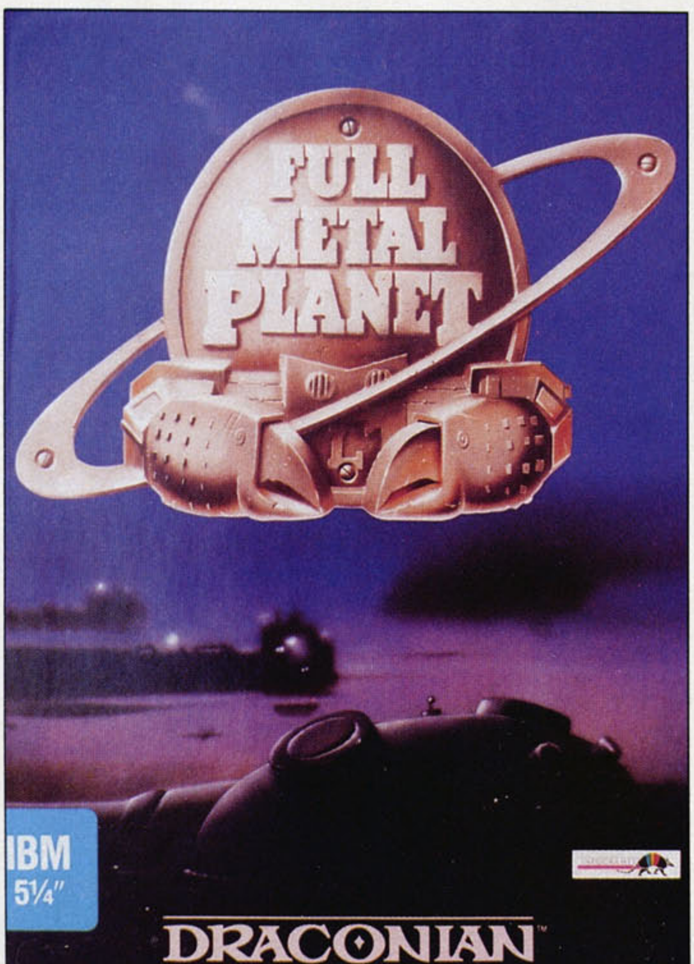




The Tides of Ambition

Data East's Full Metal Planet

by Roger White



TITLE:	Full Metal Planet
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED ON:	IBM
#PLAYERS:	1-4
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Hitech Productions
PUBLISHER:	Data East San Jose, CA

Full Metal Planet places the player in the role of commander of an interplanetary mining freighter. The freighter is orbiting a planet rich with ore nodes, but three competitors are preparing to land at the same time. To further complicate matters, the planet is unstable and suffers from rapidly changing tides. These rapid changes can swamp one's ground craft or ground the freighter's boats as they go about the business of collecting ore nodes. Such events are not usually fatal, but they are a tremendous inconvenience. The other hazard is that the other three freighter captains/competitors feel that everyone else's equipment is as eligible for harvesting as the ore nodes themselves. They may opt to kill or capture another ship's equipment with their tanks and assault boats unless, of course, that particular freighter's commander can use his own tanks and assault boats to stop them. Naturally, turn about is fair play, however. The game consists of 21 turns of "safe" activity, after which the world could flood completely. It *will* flood after turn 25.

That's Board Gaming, Not Bored Gaming

Full Metal Planet is a well-done example of using a computer to make a board game easy to play. The graphics produce a screen display as colorful as any game board and the mouse-adapted interface makes moving pieces on the screen even easier than moving chits on a game board. Then comes the best part: the computer takes care of all the accounting: moves, points scored and terrain effects.

The game is based on a board game that has been popular in France for many years. It was originally programmed and published in France by **Infogrames**. The graphics and user-interface of *Full Metal Planet* are well-handled. IBM owners may regret the opening sound track as "performed" by the internal IBM speaker, however. That can start any human player's teeth grinding before it turns off. It stops automatically when the copy protection code is entered. If ever there was a reward for getting the copy protection right, this is it.

The mouse interface is useful and smooth. The implementation is good, but it doesn't follow the Macintosh tradition of "click and drag" that has now spread to a lot of PC-based games. It *feels*

(Continued on page 42, after sidebar)

Tactical Hints For Ambitious Commanders

Here are some rules of thumb to help you get this planetary mining business in hand.

First, one should land on the edge of the map in order to engender less potential combat. It is useful to land on the water's edge so it is possible to launch the raft and attack boats, but it is expedient to land as near a corner as possible. This reduces the chance of being mobbed by one's competitors.

Second, recognize that tanks and crabs are replaceable. The weather hen can build more tanks and crabs, so losing one or two of them isn't too critical to the overall effort. One's weather hen, heap tank and assault boats *are* irreplaceable, however. Also, aggressive commanders should be especially careful to conserve their assault boats and capture any possible from the others. The center of the board is mostly water so they can move from battle to battle quickly.

Third, remember that freighter assaults aren't difficult. If one commander is close to a single computer-controlled competitor, it is important to conquer the artificial opponent. The computer doesn't put up a strong defense and once he is under the human's control, there are both extra movement points and the benefit of using the computer's weather hen, assuming the computer commander has not lost it. Whenever a freighter is conquered, it is wise to rebuild the turrets right away. Unless this is accomplished, a single competitor tank can drive in from twenty squares away and take one's hard-earned prize away in an instant.

Fourth, consider using weather hens for remote assaults. Weather hens forecast the tides. They also build armies. One can use them as a way to carry an assault to a competitor's territory. Move the hen near his or her freighter (build pontoons with the weather hen or use the barge if the target is over water). Then, start picking up ore and converting it into tanks. One should always analyze one's opponents move potential carefully, since it is possible to lose the weather hen trying to be so brazen.

Fifth, remember to save action points for surprise moves. It is possible to save either five or ten action points from one move to apply to the next move. This allows one to surprise an opponent with an extra long move. Conversely, alert commanders should watch out for what the opponents may plan to do with an extra five or ten points.

Finally, one should not kill equipment that can be captured. If one has saved up for a long move, it is often possible to kill one protector of a group and then capture the other, along with many pieces of what they were *both* protecting. Remember that while it is not normally possible to move into a space covered by two enemy fields of fire, you can do so if you're going to destroy one of those enemies by doing so. This "move under fire maneuver" starts as a fire option, not a move option.

The Tides of Ambition

(Continued from page 40)

reversed in that the player clicks on the destination first, then on the object that is going to that destination.

The graphics use VGA/EGA capabilities to good advantage. The illustrations and boards use rich mix of green-yellow hues that have an "earth tone" feel to them, but the use of a military green may be offensive to some who prefer a lighter color palette.

That's Exploitation, Not Exploration

Full Metal Planet is a game balanced for multi-player play. The game has a simple movement system based on action points that are allocated among the various units and features deterministic combat resolution like chess and *Diplomacy* (no dice rolling). This economy of movement and simplicity in fighting lets the players devote a lot of time and attention to interplayer activities – negotiating and scheming. *Full Metal Planet* also addresses the problem of slow movers by enforcing move time limits. The game can be played solo and will be enjoyable for a person that likes chess-like games where there are pieces to move, sufficient time is provided to think about a move and a good move can't be "ruined" by a bad dice roll. The computer player isn't strong, but solo games can be made more challenging by playing a speed game with a short move time limit. The moves in *Full Metal Planet* are not handled in secrecy, nor are they handled simultaneously. This, combined with the fact that there are only four players, means that using the "warm seat" method of entering moves – each player in turn sits in front of the screen and makes his or her moves, then gets up and lets the next player in – isn't a problem. It does feature something of a problem, however, in that there is no way of taking a map *away* from the screen so that players can "conference" to discuss moves and countermoves while they're not at the console. This reviewer found himself tempted to get a copy of the board game, just to use it as a conference map.

Those who are concerned about copy protection will find nothing extraordinary in the game's look-up-a-logo-in-the-manual method of copy protection. However, the protection *does* allow a network installation that some will find both welcome and surprising. It works fine on a NetWare network and can be run from a high-lettered drive (a letter beyond E:) in a deeply-nested subdirectory without problems. However, the installation routine makes it easier to install it on a local hard drive and then copy the subdirectory to a network drive rather than installing directly to the network. The program uses a lot of RAM so it's sensitive to how many drivers and TSR's (terminate-and-stay-resident programs such as *Sidekick*) are loaded. Most important to note, however, is that the program is not very informative when it has problems. Rather, it just locks up after the "play game" command is issued.

Full Metal Planet offers a viable choice for gamers looking for a multi-player strategy game on the computer, a challenging game which can require from a short to medium amount of time to complete and a game that does not follow tried and true formulas of game design. CGW

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Scorpion's Tale

Scorpia Enrolls in Spellcasting 101

As Told by Scorpia

Well, here we are with spring already peeking around the corner. Sigh. They just don't seem to make winters as long as they used to. Either that, or there's some dastardly magic at work. And speaking of magic, arcane doings are afoot elsewhere, too....

Spellcasting 101 marks the return of Steve Meretzky to the adventure game scene. Similar to Steve's previous *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, *Spellcasting* has a fairly suggestive theme. However, where *LGOP* was more of a spoof and the sex mostly nonexistent, *S101* is a bit more daring. Only a bit, though; don't expect reams of pornographic prose, because there isn't any. Just some clever writing, and pictures of women who are (ahem) extremely healthy. For those who prefer to dispense with such shenanigans, however, there is also a "nice" setting with no sex at all.

The interface was described in the Sneak Preview featured in *CGW* #76, as were the rest of the game mechanics, so we'll get right to the story. Anyway, what we have here is another "nerd makes good, kinda sorta" tale, featuring Ernie Eaglebeak, wizard "wannabe." Ernie has problems. Actually, he has one main problem, a rather nasty and vicious step-father. This obnoxious specimen is about to railroad our boy into an unpleasant apprenticeship, calculated to break his back if not his spirit. Ernie better leave home fast, before it's too late.

Besides, home is nothing more than a dreary chamber with straw for a bed and an unspeakable potty room. Saying goodbye to that shouldn't be hard. At least, not if Ernie finds the way out to the alley quickly enough.

So here's Ernie in the alley, fragrant enough to knock a crow off a carcass at fifty paces. Fortunately, there's a toolshed only a step away, and Ernie knows where the gardener hides the key. Too bad Minnie the Interfering Neighbor happens by at just that moment to plant her big foot on it. Things couldn't possibly get worse.

Then again, maybe they could, because stepdaddy is by the alley gate chatting with a girl that Ernie's had his eye on for awhile. Who knows when either or both of them might take a look in the wrong direction? This is no time for gentlemanly manners. Ernie needs that key and desperate measures are necessary.

Whew! He got away just in time. Now it's off to the university for fun, frolic, parties, and perhaps even something of an education. After Ernie gets past registration (which requires the application form that comes in the game box), he's pretty much at liberty to do what he wants for awhile.

Wandering around the campus and making a small map (even though the game has a sort of automapping, nothing's marked on it) is a useful way to pass some time. Picking up anything along the way that isn't nailed down also helps. Ernie might even want to listen in on a lecture or two. Whatever, the one thing he really must do is drop in on both frat parties that night. Hey, ya never know who he might meet...maybe even a girl!

A girl like Gretchen Snowbunny, f'r instance. No, Ernie doesn't quite get to make it with her, but there will be other opportunities later on for such experiences (heh). However, Gretchen will provide our hero with a way to enter the Snowbunny home, although Ernie has to take matters into his own hands, so to speak.

The next morning, Ernie is up bright and early and snooping around everywhere he can. If he hasn't figured out where to use the SKONN spell, here's a hint: there's more than one kind of bust. Also, the trap door in the lecture room should not be overlooked.

After a pleasant day of exploration (and grabbing everything that isn't nailed down), Ernie can enjoy dinner with Professor Tickingclock and his wife. He might as well enjoy it, as this will be the last bit of leisure he has for some time to come.

Thursday marks the big change. It starts off like any other day, but then Ernie's mom shows up, babbling incoherently. Before Ernie can figure out what's happening, he's knocked out. When he wakes up, the entire campus is deserted. Something is definitely wrong here.

On the other hand, the empty college does present several opportunities, one of which is snarfing Tickingclock's special surfboard. If you have to travel, that's the only way to get around. After he gets that (and a few extra spells), it's time to bid a fond farewell to Sorcerer University and head out into the world...or at least to the Island of Lost Souls.

The Island of Lost Souls, pop. 80, has a problem. All the residents have been magically transformed into homonymic (look it up!) objects. Ernie has to set things right and bring back *all eighty* inhabitants. That's a bit much (eighty puns!), but there's no way around it. This is one time you might want to bring in your friends and neighbors to help out.



After all that work, Ernie receives a key (big wow), and heads off for an even worse place: The Island Where Time Runs Backward. It's difficult to explain this one. Especially since Ernie somehow changes into someone resembling Goldilocks when he arrives. That's not the bad part, though.

What's calculated to give anyone headaches is figuring out what was already done and then doing it, one move later. Does that make sense? I didn't think so. This is even worse than running into yourself in the mines of Sorcerer (which, come to think of it, was also written by Meretzky).

Anyway, you *must* save often during this part of the game. There is an absolutely rigid sequence here, and one wrong move at any time will bring Ernie to a nasty end. We don't want that to happen, so be careful and pay close attention to the text.

Let me give you a little idea of what this is like. After Ernie is transformed, he (she?) is holding a piece of waybread. Dropping the bread moves him (her?) south. Now trying to move south brings Ernielocks (Goldiebeak?) to a cottage.

Moving southwest causes our hero(ine?) to fly into the air and through the window into the cottage. Got it now? I hope so, because the rest of the island is just like that.

Finally, Ernie gets to the end (beginning?), receives a new spell, and is free to take off again. None too soon; all that backwards stuff was making his head spin. What he needs is a little change of pace (and maybe something else, hehe) and Amazon Island is just the place for it.

Contrary to popular notion, the Amazons are not man-haters. Indeed, they welcome our boy with open arms (and possibly other things) upon his arrival.

Now, Ernie, just try to get away before you become totally exhausted, one way or another. I hate to say it, but escape is going to be a dragged-out procedure, so don't overlook anything that might be useful.

All this surfing around (not to mention other activities) can work up an appetite, and I know the perfect place to fuel up: The Restaurant At The End Of the Univ — err — Ocean. Floating placidly in the water as Ernie arrives is yet another spell box.

Tough luck, though: a shark pops up and swallows it (the shark must have been named Mikey). Oh well, can't win 'em all. Anyway, Ernie came here for a meal, so he better go inside and order while the

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Might and Magic II	$36	$30	$36	-	$42
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Silent Service I	$20	$20	$20	$20	$20
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ordering's good (this restaurant is going through its life cycle pretty rapidly).

Okay, so maybe he didn't get to eat anything; the stop still wasn't a total loss (at least not if he got that spell box, and it would a rotten shame if he didn't!). And there's still a place or two left to visit. Such as the mysterious island, one of whose coordinates doesn't appear on the surfboard dial.

However, if Ernie's gotten this far along in the game, that ought to be no problem at all (no, I won't spell out the answer for you). In no time at all, hardly, Ernie arrives at the Isle of The Gods.

Interestingly enough, they live in a condo. No one's around right now, but if Ernie waits long enough, something's bound to happen. Of course, it would be smart not to be too visible; you never know how a god might feel about finding a trespasser in his home.

Eventually, alas, Ernie is discovered, not once, but twice: first, by the delightful Ocarina and then by her suspicious husband, the repellant Glockenspiel (so you helped the lady with her crossword puzzle, is that such a crime? Oh, you were playing in naughty mode, eh? Hmm...).

Either way, Ernie is not annihilated on the spot. Glock isn't that nice a god. Instead, he drags our boy out to the trash dump in back and demands that Ernie clean it up...*all* of it. Must be Ernie's lucky day.

Well, if he had several lifetimes, he might manage the task. However, Ernie doesn't have that long, and besides, he has more important things to take care of, anyway. Proper use of a couple of spells should do the job, and Ernie can make tracks out of there while the gods admire his handiwork.

All right, the preliminaries are over, and it's time for the main event. Ernie arrives at Blackwand Island (hey, there's nowhere else left to go!) and admires the sea serpent with its gaping jaws. A knotty problem, but I know Ernie can handle it easily.

Say, does this place look familiar? It should: it's an exact replica of the spell simulation that Ernie went through (we hope!) back at good old Sorcerer U. Which means he knows exactly what to do to get past the humungous dragon and up into the tower to save the lady imprisoned inside. Only this time, this being real life (of a sort), Ernie and friend can go through the trap door.

Well, well, what's this? A room with three big X's on the floor, and three gates. Gee, I wonder if...yep, stepping on an X opens one of the doors. Counting on his fingers, Ernie realizes that one more person is needed, since there are two people and three X's (thereby proving the value of an education in arithmetic).

Look, Ernie, there's a painting on the wall; that should bring back some fond (ha!) memories. It should also be a blatant clue as to what needs to be done here. Before long, three people are each standing on an X, all the gates are open, and Ernie and company are running through to the final encounter with...well, *you* play the game and find out.

Anyway, Mr. Nefarious Villain is about to complete the awesome and dreadful Sorcerer's Appliance, which will cause all sorts of awesome and dreadful things to occur (such as a premature ending to the game!). Ernie can't let that happen, not after getting this far along.

There isn't much time, either. Think fast, Ernie. You'll need a novel approach, a couple of spells, a whale of a time, and a hot spellbook to see things through. So, what if you end up interred? There are worse fates (and as soon as I think of one, I'll tell you what it is). Ah well, even if the rewards are less than magnificent, you won, and that's what counts (suuure).

Anyway, I see by the old invisible clock on the wall it's that time again. Until next time, happy adventuring! CGW

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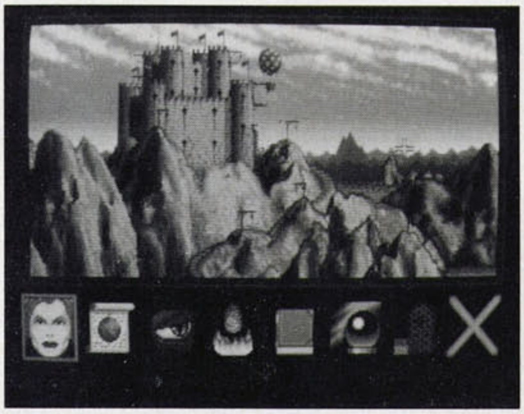
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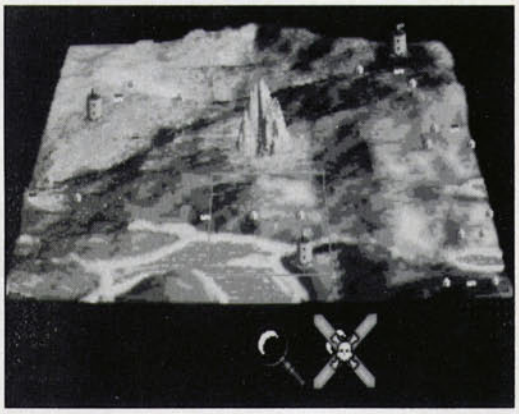
To Breed or Not to Breed

Cinemaware's Dragon Lord *Import*

by Allen L. Greenberg

TITLE:	Dragon Lord
SYSTEM:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
REVIEWED:	Amiga
# PLAYERS:	1-3
PRICE:	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Palace Software
DISTRIBUTOR:	Spotlight Software c/o Cinemaware Thousand Oaks, CA





Dragon-slayers of myth and ancient times must have had a relatively easy occupation. After all, they were simply required to butcher those wonderful beasts. Surely, a truer test of talent and superiority must have fallen to those who nurtured and raised the dragons from egghood and directed them toward their tasks. The latter is the challenge of *Dragon Lord*, a recent release under **Cinemaware**'s **Spotlight** label (reserved for European imports).

Dragon Lord presents a mixture of strategy gaming, role-playing and economics. Three players, any of which may be controlled by human *or* computer, are engaged in a bitter competition to locate all three pieces of a magic talisman. The pieces are hidden among the cities, towns and open fields of a large section of land. The dragons are the fire-breathing muscle by which players secure these properties and do battle with their opponents. Players take turns giving orders, casting spells, and manipulating properties. Combat is resolved and other results revealed after all players have input their orders (i.e. phased movement rather than real-time).

A Magic System that "Really Cooks"

The most challenging and powerful resource available to each contender is magic. Each dragon-lord must also be a virtual "kitchen-magician" to even begin to knowledgeably manipulate the deluge of reagents floating around in this game. In a device which can only be called "vege-magic," any of 30 ingredients may be prepared to produce a variety of effects on humans or dragons. This multi-orificed device is capable of mixing, cutting, grinding, heating or cooling — whatever is called for in the spell's recipe. These recipes are to be found in the game's documentation and are presented with the same clarity and simplicity as to be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

To master the spells of *Dragon Lord*, the player must first master a notation made up of circles, squares and triangles. It is used to indicate a substance's properties, as well as its instructions for preparation. These symbols appear on a roadmap-sized chart which requires careful study. The kitchen-mage must also be aware that most substances will have more than one attribute, so almost any spell is bound to have side effects. It is up to the player to determine these in advance and, if necessary, compensate for them with other drugs. This system of magic may well be one of the most extensive and exhausting spellcasting systems ever to appear in a computer RPG.

Spell ingredients may be purchased from sinister-eyed vendors who, like the Avon lady in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*, make frequent castle calls. These drawbridge-to-drawbridge salespeople charge steep prices for their substances, however, and dragon lords need to cling to every penny in order to keep their incubators' furnaces burning. This is, of course, because nested in these very incubators are dragon eggs which contain the baby creatures necessary for the dragon lord to complete his mission. If any of the three lords is unable to pay the fuel bills, the furnaces will shut down and the contents of the eggs will die. Reagents for spells are necessary because judicious spellcasting helps the eggs to develop and often helps to breed dragons eugenically for specific missions.

Further, dragons generally require their master's magic to keep them healthy and fighting. Dragon attributes are measured numerically in familiar role-playing fashion, using such terms as "strength" and "IQ." They conquer villages by wiping out a significant portion of their populations. Some cynics may note that the dragons actually serve as a goon squad so that the population (a dismal breed of barbarian, too dull-witted to be populating some other, less abusive CRPG) can be given over to the player for taxation and other torment.

The Dragons Come Home to Roast

Conquest of a village can take place in one of two ways. Normally, the program will determine the success of a dragon to subdue the village based on the dragon's statistics versus those of the population. Modifications occur, however, because villages, as well as dragons, are subject to the influence of spellcasting. Players also have the option to participate in *Dragon Lord*'s only arcade sequence. This is a vertically-scrolling exercise where dragonfire pours down from the joystick-controlled beast above, while the town's defenders below do their best to bring the attacker down. The program's designers wisely decided to make this sequence optional, as many players will actually find it disruptive to the flow of the game.



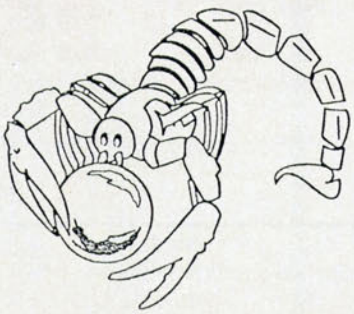
Villages are not only important as a supply of money and power, but they will eventually yield a piece of the talisman. When this happens, a dragon lord must designate one of his dragons to stay and sit on the piece in order to claim it. Other pieces will be found within or in between other villages. Three dragons belonging to one player must be sitting on the talisman pieces for that player to win the game. Even if a village does not uncover a missing piece, it may still produce money or magic reagents.

Dragon Lord features only a handful of graphics but they are beautiful. Maps and illustrations are presented with the quality of oil paintings. The dragons and the spell-preparing apparatus are also rendered with quite a bit of imagination. The background music is respectably haunting and the rumbling sound effects are realistic and in stereo.

Letting Sleeping Dragons Lie

Many will find game play painfully slow. Certainly the spells alone, without which progress is unlikely, will require time and careful thought before using. And, unlike the conquest of the villages, a carefully planned process, the actual search for the talisman proceeds randomly. Players must simply conquer with their fingers crossed because there are no clues to guide them. The flow of information is also somewhat slow and players may often be unaware of the results of an action until the following turn.

Although slow-moving, *Dragon Lord* is definitely a "breed" apart from the traditional computer RPG. It deserves, at least, some high praise for its innovative game play. Dragon-slayers, heroes, and other seekers of more visceral satisfaction may wish to sit this one out. Strategists and other evil-minded intellectuals with patience to spare may very well enjoy *Dragon Lord*. CGW



Scorpion's View

When Is a Sequel More Than a Sequel? Sierra's King's Quest V

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and, often, controversial perspective.

Deep in the crystal, the clouds begin to disperse. A ray of light burgeons into a dazzling array of colors, surmounted by a golden crown. There is no doubt about it: the king has returned, in a blaze of rainbows.

Without question, *King's Quest V* is a graphic tour-de-force. This is the game to boot up when you want to show off your VGA system. Rich in color and lavish in detail, scene after scene unfolds in gorgeous glory, enough to brighten the most jaded eye, including mine! I don't usually get very excited over graphics, but these are something special. Over twenty people are listed under the art credits and they should all stand up and take a bow.

One of the most outstanding features of the graphics is how they sustain mood. *King's Quest V* is, essentially, a fairy tale and this delicate atmosphere is maintained throughout the game, in spite of one jarring element (more on that later). You really have the feeling of being in some magical realm, where anything can happen.

In spite of the detail, the animation was very quick. Only in the most crowded scenes was there any noticeable slowness, and even that is acceptable. Do keep in mind, though, that the game was reviewed on a 386 with a fast clock; on a slower system, there is likely to be more delay.

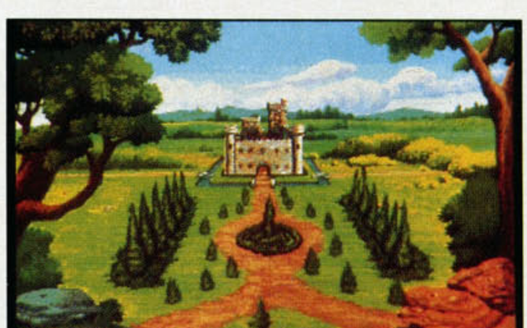
Those who have a sound card can enjoy the additional enhancement of excellent music. There is a wide variety of tunes in the game, each very well done and carefully matched to the scene. The scoring may be the best ever in any Sierra game. It sounded quite good on my Soundblaster and those with Roland cards claim that it is superb.



Unlike previous adventures, *King's Quest V* features a totally non-typing interface, vaguely reminiscent of the one in the *Manhunter* series. Everything is controlled via icons from a menu bar at the top of the screen. The cursor itself changes shape to indicate which type of icon is active: movement (a striding figure), examination (an eye), manipulation (a hand) and so on.

Once you get the hang of this system, it is simple to use and eliminates a great deal of the repetition ordinarily found in most games of this kind. Instead of typing "look at this" or "look at that", you need only position the "eye" on something and click the mouse button. If there is anything special about the object, you see a message; if not, the icon changes briefly to a red X.

Movement is handled better here than ever before through the use of the "travel" icon. This allows Graham to walk anywhere you click on the screen without having to maneuver past obstacles. Instead, the on-screen character will avoid them automatically and go directly to the designated spot.



In a similar vein, picking up or manipulating objects is accomplished by clicking on them with the "hand" icon. Graham does not have to be next to the item first (unless reaching it is part of a puzzle). This does away with all the "you're not close enough" silliness that has been the bane of gamers for a long time. You won't ever see that message here.

On the other hand, this also creates something of a drawback (just as it did in the *Manhunter* games). Many of the puzzles, which are already easy, are made more so by simply running through the inventory and trying everything you have. Most of the time, you don't even need to figure out how to use something. Instead, the program will perform the correct actions just by "point and click" alone.

Conversations (there are many people and creatures to talk to) are handled in the same fashion. You simply click the "talk" icon on someone (or something), and the rest is completely automatic. This is certainly a boon for those who are never sure what to ask about, or who rapidly become tired of running through a series of "keywords" with everyone they meet. For those gamers who enjoy directing everything, however, it might be a little frustrating, even though Graham's chats are always to the point.

Inventory is simple. Graham picks up whatever he can, and never drops anything. There is no drop command, therefore nothing can be lost. If an object has no function in a situation, nothing happens, and the item does not get used up. However, there are a couple of tricky instances where an item can be used incorrectly, so some caution is necessary. Usually, correct use of an object is heralded by the sound of a bell

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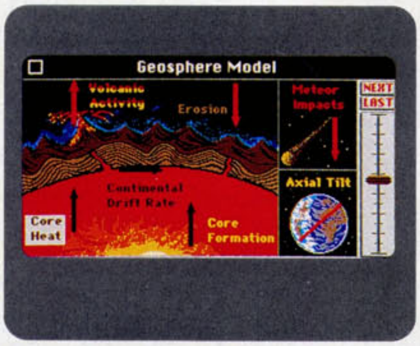
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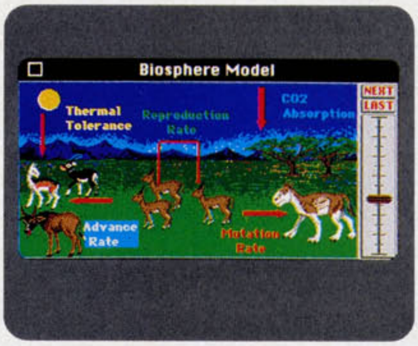
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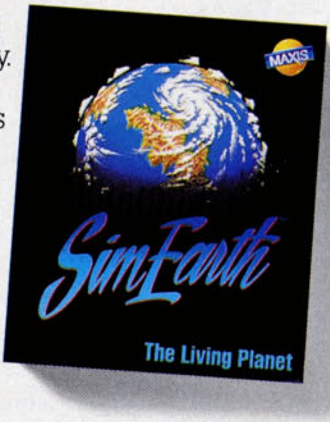


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and an increase in score. The absence of these is often an indicator that you made a mistake.

In a way, *King's Quest V* brings the series full circle. The first two games centered on Graham's trials in becoming king of Coventry and finding a wife. The next two focused on his son and daughter. Now, we return again to Graham, a bit older, a little grayer of hair, but still fit and trim and ready to take on a quest, even if it isn't quite by choice.

Out picking posies (literally) one day, Graham returns home to find he has none: both his castle and his family have vanished without a trace. The only witness to this gargantuan removal is an owl, sitting on a nearby branch. Unfortunately, aside from telling Graham what happened, the bird (Cedric by name) can provide little information. However, he can transport Graham to the wizard Crispin, who may be able to help.

Thus begins Graham's quest to find out the who and why of this amazing theft, as well as how to get back his home and family again. Much of the action takes place in and around the country of Serenia, since Crispin is able to determine that this is the land that holds the answers. Graham, however, must find those answers on his own.

So, off he goes to explore this strange world. The only thing *KQ V* lacks is an auto-mapping feature, so it is necessary to make your own maps as you go along. This is particularly important in the desert, one of the few not-so-bright parts of the game.

I mapped out a hundred and thirty (!) screens of this arid wasteland and have heard it is even larger. Why so much space was given over to something that is mostly nothing is hard to understand, especially since Graham can't last very long among the sands without water. Six screens is all he has. On the seventh, he drops dead of dehydration.

There are oases along the way that can sustain him, but finding them is a matter of trial and error. All you can do is move Graham around in different directions, restoring when he dies and hoping it won't be too long in between before he finds some water. This is particularly aggravating as there are only three locations of any importance: the temple, the skeleton, and the bandit camp. Everything else is just sand and cliffs.

Also irritating are several "time dependent" situations in the game, as well as some "instant death gotchas" (the jarring element I mentioned earlier). There are occasions in the game where Graham does not have the luxury of unlimited time to look around or think things out. He must act very quickly or the game will be lost.

The desert temple is one of these quick action sequences. Graham has only a few moves to pick up the two items he needs and get out before the door shuts, imprisoning him forever. There is really no time to look around at all and players may be in for an unpleasant surprise when they see just how little time there is to do anything in here.

The cat and mouse scene is another. Graham must save the mouse while it is being chased. Otherwise, it will be killed and the game cannot be completed. The mouse does not appear again (after all, it's kitty chow) and that critter is *very* important.

The "gotcha" instances make for intensive hair-pulling. For example, at one point Graham and Cedric go sailing in a boat. They have no idea where they are going; they have no directions and no particular goal (at least, I never found any hints in the game about this). It is mainly a "let's go see what's out there" expedition and what they keep running into much of the time is a sea serpent.

It eats them immediately, with no chance of escape. Ergo, there is much tedious res-

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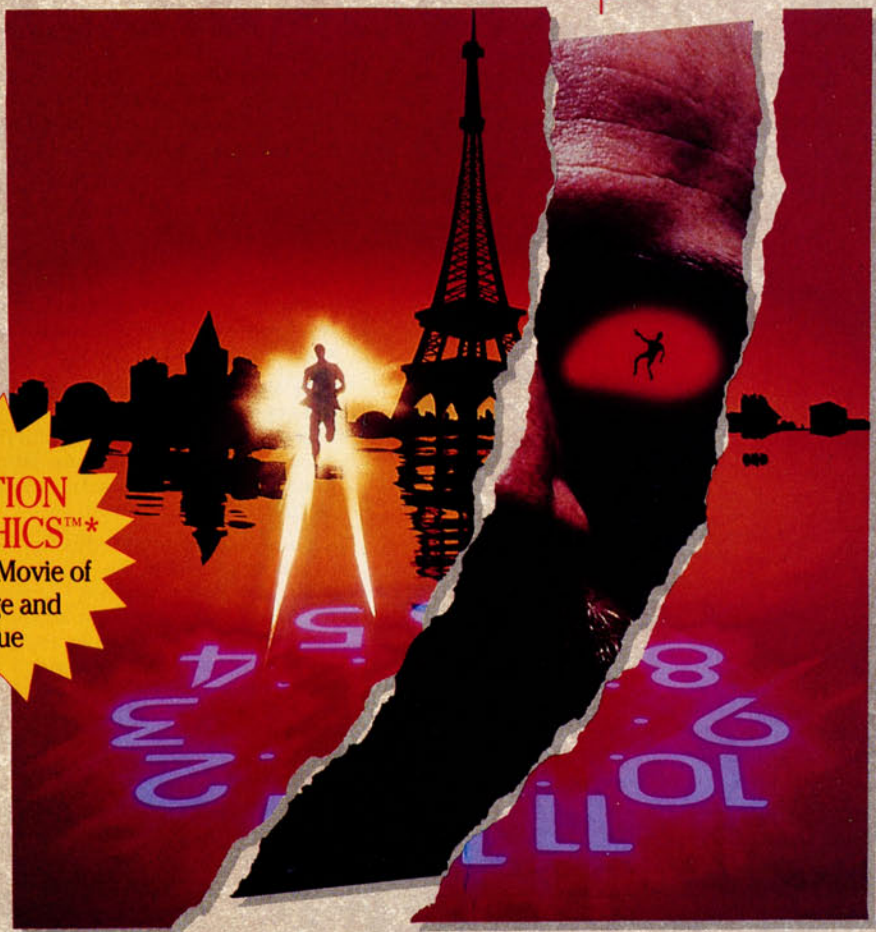
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toring as you try to find, by trial and error alone, the safe path past the monster. For both this and the desert, a map or other direction of some kind would have been preferable, thereby saving a lot of frustration and wasted time. Therefore, save often. Any time you think Graham may be heading into trouble or any time you feel nervous about something, save the game. Also, save it just on general principles now and then, to avoid an unexpected and unpleasant surprise that may set you far back in the game.

Cedric is sometimes an indicator of potentially dangerous situations. Any time he refuses to enter a particular area, it is a good idea to save before proceeding onward. *Cedric* may not have to go everywhere, but *Graham* certainly does.

One save you should have and be careful not to over-write is just before Graham and Cedric enter the mountains. Beyond a certain point, there is no turning back. If Graham is lacking any important objects, he can't return for them, and your only recourse is to restore the game.

As I noted previously, many of the puzzles are not very difficult. Usually, if you are stuck on something, it means you don't yet have the necessary item to overcome the obstacle. When you can't make headway in a situation, no matter what you do, leave it and go looking elsewhere. For instance, the Forbidden Forest is best left alone until the desert is completed. The tavern should be avoided until the mouse has been saved, and so on.

Paying close attention to the screen is important. Look at everything when you arrive at a new location. I had a hard time with one puzzle because I kept missing a stick on the ground (and it is easy to miss). The "eye" makes it easy to check for critical objects; don't neglect doing that.

Above all, be kind to (most) animals. This is a constant theme throughout the game. Graham has the ability to talk to them, and doing so is crucial to success. Being nice (most of the time) is one means of making progress in the adventure.

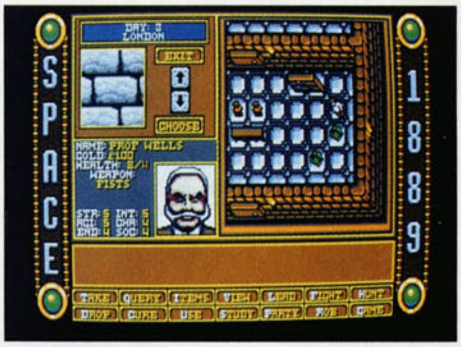
A word of caution is necessary here in regard to the end of the game. After the villain is defeated, Graham is reunited with his family in a long, automatic sequence. For some reason, this sequence appears to require more memory than the rest of the game; there have been reports of the program crashing at this point. With that in mind, you may want to remove any memory-resident programs before entering the end game portion (in the castle) to avoid this difficulty.

In one sense, the irritations noted earlier are a shame, as they mar what might otherwise have been something close to the perfect adventure. *King's Quest V* is not outstanding for the puzzles. Those are mostly simple, but a game need not be a mindbender to be good. The flaws mentioned above aside, the fusion of elements, graphics, music, storyline, thematic concepts, interface and atmosphere make this game stand out.

For the beginner, *King's Quest V* is ideal. The interface removes much of the frustration and "learning curve" associated with the more text-oriented adventures and the majority of puzzles are not very hard. For the more advanced gamer (particularly those with VGA, fast clock speed and a sound card), it can be a pleasant diversion.

As the crystal clouds over again, remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways: On Delphi: stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York NY 10028. **CGW**

The Curious Case of the Vicarious Victorian



Paragon's Space 1889

by Todd Threadgill

TITLE:	Space 1889
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Steve Suhy, Don Wuenschell, and F.J. Lennon
PUBLISHER:	Paragon Software
DISTRIBUTOR:	MicroProse Software Hunt Valley, MD



It is 1889. Mankind, with the help of brilliant inventors like Thomas Edison, has discovered how to navigate the "luminiferous ether" between the planets. Interplanetary travel on ether flyers has become commonplace. Contact with several races of intelligent beings has been established. It is an age of adventure and enlightenment in a world that never was.

Space 1889 presents the player with just such a world. Drawing from the science-fiction fantasies of such classic authors as H.G. Wells and Jules Verne, the creators of *Space 1889* have come up with an irresistible premise for role- playing adventure.

Prologue (Pre-Game Considerations)

The software comes on unprotected disks, but when starting the game, the player must enter a word from the excellent manual in order to verify ownership. Unfortunately, unlike most games with password protection, *Space 1889* gives the player only one chance to enter the correct word before being returned to DOS. The ability to make at least one more attempt would be welcome.

The authors' emphasis on female characters is noteworthy. Players are encouraged to include women in their parties, as some of the careers that are available to characters are for women only. This is a refreshing change from the usual male-only orientation of role-playing games, and the designers are to be commended.

Typical to CRPGs, the game requires a party of characters to be formed prior to beginning the game. Also, true to the genre, the players may either use the pre-generated characters that come with the package or make their own. More distinctive, however, is the ability to custom design *character classes* via a series of easy-to-navigate menus. However, players who decide to create their characters and/or character classes from scratch should be forewarned: each character features a sizeable array of skills — such as Marksmanship, Bargaining, and Medical — that are determined by the computer. It is easy to overlook the absence of vital skills during the creation phase. For example, a party without medically-skilled characters will not be able to revive unconscious characters, and completing the game will be extremely difficult.

The Curtain Rises (The Game Worlds)

Once the party has been created, game play begins. The story begins in London. At a gala reception for an archaeological exhibit of Egyptian artifacts, the characters overhear a conversation regarding the as-yet-undiscovered tomb of King Tutankhamen. The lure of such a discovery proves impossible for them to resist and they join forces in hopes of finding King Tut's tomb themselves. This is only the beginning of an adventure that will eventually reward the party with what is truly the ultimate treasure: immortality.

In the course of the game, the party will travel to the far corners of the earth, as well as to other planets. The technology of the ether flyers (large wooden ships that travel from planet to planet) is limited in range, and travel beyond the asteroid belt is considered impractical. Thus, the party is unable to journey to Jupiter or beyond (until late in the game, when the player will acquire the necessary equipment). The inner planets, however, are packed with settlements. The cities feature the standard complement of shops: Gun Shops, Markets, Banks, and Taverns. Many of the towns also have mysterious caves within their boundaries, ready for exploration. Each planet has one ether port (where ether flyers arrive and depart). Here, the party may purchase a new flyer or update an existing one with better armor, more powerful engines, and more deadly weapons. Ether flyers may be constructed of regular wood or of a gravity-defying variant known as "liftwood." Liftwood is expensive and hard to find, since it comes from a rare species of tree that only grows in certain mountainous regions of Mars.

As might be expected, the recent confluence of Terran and Martian society upon the surface of Mars has not been without conflict. Different factions (most notably the Germans) are struggling to take control of the planet's supply of liftwood. This and other shady human plots for economic exploitation are sprinkled throughout the game and add a dimension of realism that is missing from many other role-playing games.

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To The British Go The Spoils (Combat)

As the adventure unfolds, the characters will encounter hostile parties, either on the surface of a planet or in space. The player issues commands to the characters ("Attack the German Soldier"), and all but one of them — who is controlled by the player in real time — carry out the commands automatically. Planetary combat is rather confusing, and players will probably lose their characters to the computer-controlled enemies several times before getting the knack of the combat system.

One reason for this is that when combat mode is engaged, the party stands in a tight group of at least two rows: front and back. In most games of this type, this isn't a problem, but in *Space 1889*, players will not attack unless they have a clear shot at the enemy. Half of the player's characters stand around doing nothing until the front ranks are moved out of the way, often a difficult or impossible maneuver, depending on the layout of the battle area. This can prove to be a major disadvantage against some of the more capable opponents or when there is more than one enemy on the screen. However, none of the opponents possess superhuman strength or speed, and most can be readily defeated once the player is familiar with the controls.

Space combat is another matter. Battles between ether flyers take place in the atmosphere of a planet or moon. The combating ships fly along a horizontal landscape (a la *Defender*) and fire shots at each other. From this reviewer's experience, shots never miss their targets. Space combat is entertaining when the battles are short, but can quickly become tedious during an extended struggle. Players can also "join" an enemy flyer, and attack from within. This mode is similar to ground combat, and must be performed by the player at least once in the course of the game.

Her Majesty *Will* Be Pleased (Pros)

The EGA graphics are excellent. They capture the "look" of exotic planets and alien cultures in a fashion easily imagined from the writings of Victorian Era science fiction authors. Issuing commands is a quick and intuitive matter — everything is available from easy-to-access menus, and the keyboard, mouse, and joystick are fully supported. Unlike many CRPGs, combat is not the primary emphasis of *Space 1889*. Since this aspect of the game is the most difficult and frustrating, the authors wisely opted to emphasize exploration and puzzle-solving.

We Are Not Amused (Cons)

The game does have some weaknesses. The plot lacks an identifiable objective and characters tend to stumble upon one discovery after another without having any idea as to how all the pieces fit together until very late in the game. Also, most of the non-player-characters in the game speak in a mixture of English and gibberish that appears to be an attempt at representing strange accents. For some of the NPCs, it is an interesting touch, while with others (notably the Martians) it is just plain hard to read. Some of the information gleaned from the NPCs is important, but it can be lost in the torrent of nonsense characters that appears on the screen.

Epilogue

Space 1889 is an intriguing product, and ideal for those who like adventures with a unique flavor. Players who revel in bloodshed should look elsewhere, but gamers who yearn for something different (and don't mind having a dash of history thrown in) will find what they're looking for in *Space 1889*. **CGW**


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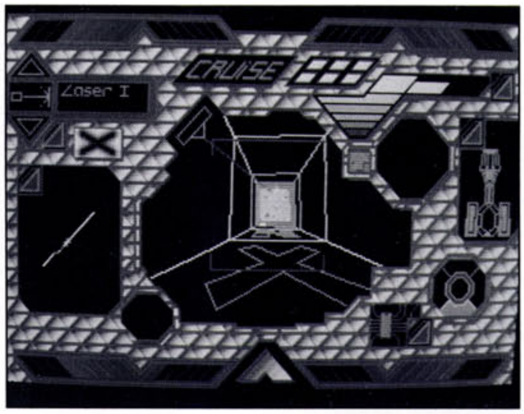
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A *Magic Fly* Buzzed When the Aliens Died

by Allen L. Greenberg



TITLE:	Magic Fly
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST
PRICE:	$39.95
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

Recently, this humble reviewer of Amiga software was apprehended for assaulting an MS-DOS computer. The victim was a smug 386, possessing far too much memory and several disk drives which were cleverly concealed. Worst of all, it had the audacity to be displaying **Origin**'s best-selling outer-space combat simulator, *Wing Commander*. The reviewer's seemingly mindless act of violence quickly becomes clear and reasonable when one considers how few successful science-fiction flight and combat simulators there are for the Amiga. Okay, the above incident didn't really occur. Still, this reviewer is grateful that, at least, one small step towards filling this depressing void has been taken in the release of **Electronic Arts**' European import, *Magic Fly*.

In *Magic Fly*, the player pilots a ship by the same name into the interior of a vast asteroid. The asteroid is honeycombed with tunnels which were once part of a mining project but are now the home of a nasty race of aliens. The player's objectives are to: map out the tunnels, locate and shut down various centers of alien activity, photograph the various enemy aircraft hidden away, and, finally, blow everything up.

The player views the action from within the cockpit. Alternatively, the player may choose to remove the interior of the cockpit from the screen and view the action as a hood ornament rather than a pilot. In either case, the oncoming scenery includes both vector graphics and solid polygons. Walls curve and branch in various directions. Barriers, both stationary and oscillating, appear frequently and serve to complicate navigation through the tunnels.

The cockpit screen of *Magic Fly* is really quite innovative. The center portion can be toggled to display either the fore or aft view from the spaceship. Also, scattered around the center section are graphic indicators with information concerning fuel, weapons, damage and automatic mapping. In turn, each display on the main screen is linked to a separate screen which may be called up at any time. Thus, in addition to a constant presentation of the ship's damage, the player can also access a screen which indicates the priority being given by the ship's computer to the repair of each system. After adjusting these priorities, the player may then return to the main screen. There are five of these "extra information" screens available.

Steering the craft is a function of both the mouse and the joystick. It is similar to, but a considerable improvement upon, Electronic Arts' other "fly through the tunnels" simulation, *Powerdrome*. The most often heard complaint concerning that program was that the racing vehicle was difficult, and at times impossible, to keep under control. *Magic Fly* modifies this system by adding controls using both the joystick and keyboard to enhance the manipulations of the mouse. The tunnels also contain computerized "turn lanes." When the pilot wishes to make a turn into a tunnel branching right, left, up or down, he simply moves his ship next to the tunnel wall of the same side. As the craft approaches the intersection, the computer takes over until the turn is completed.

Although the ultimate goal in *Magic Fly* is destruction of the aliens, the emphasis for most of the exercise is on exploration. Fortunately, there are several aspects of the craft which reflect this purpose. An automatic mapping device constructs a three-dimensional representation of the route as the ship enters new tunnels. This map may be examined at any time the player wishes to call it up, and may be looked at along any axis.

Exploration also involves scrutinizing the enemy. There are more than 30 different types of alien spacecraft buzzing within the asteroid. These range from toy-size to monstrous. Progress in the game is noted *not* for destroying these (although that is frequently what the pilot will have to do), but *rather* for scanning them. When an enemy is successfully scanned, its information goes into an on-board database. The player may then call up a detailed readout concerning that enemy, which includes a three-dimensional picture. This will prove useful later on, during combat.

Portions of the defunct mining operation turn out to be fuel stations which can, in turn, serve as refueling centers for the *Magic Fly*. When one of these is nearby, the pilot receives a signal and a notation of the location is made on the auto-map. These stations are important, particularly since there is only room on the ship for about 20 minutes worth of fuel. The stations are also important because this is where the ship is repaired. Bumps and bruises which would be very unlikely to bother an A-10 Thunderbolt can be quite damaging to the *Magic Fly*!

The stations are also important because this is where the ship may stock up on missiles and other special weapons. Although the ship carries unlimited laser-blasts, missiles are frequently the only way of destroying certain enemies. Each station also has exclusive distribution rights to one special weapon. Weapons often have unique applications and certain passageways will not open until they are blasted by the correct firearm.

Finally, stations are the only places where a game may be saved in progress. Interacting with the computer to perform this function, as well as the other station functions, actually involves pounding a rubber ball against the wall. Who said interplanetary mining engineers have no sense of humor?

Magic Fly is a welcome addition to the small group of science-fiction combat/flight simulators for the Amiga and Atari ST. Its greatest strength lies in the large degree of strategy and exploration present in the game. Graphically, the program offers enough to keep one playing, although it is very much lacking in visual fireworks. Which, of course, brings us back to that search for another *Wing Commander*. **CGW**

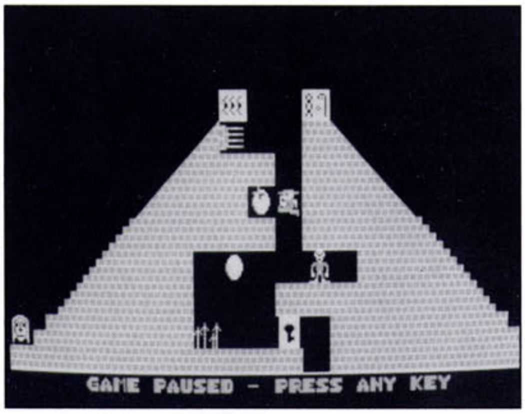
Share The Wealth

The Pharaoh's Tomb *Shareware Series*

by Michael S. Lasky

It is unusual for CGW to review a shareware program, since they are often hard to obtain and may be found in so many different versions. Pharaoh's Tomb *is so readily available and comes so highly recommended, however, that we have made an exception.*

TITLE:	Pharaoh's Tomb
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	Volume 1, shareware; $10 registration Volumes 2,3,4: $10.00 each $25 for all four volumes.
DESIGNER:	George Broussard
PUBLISHER:	Apogee Software 4206 Mayflower Garland, TX 75043



Indiana Jones had a few spears thrown at him while he searched for the lost ark. Sure, he got caught in some pretty hairy booby traps on his crusades for ancient relics, but none of them compare to the perils faced by intrepid explorer Nevada Smith in his 80-level trek to find the well-hidden *Pharaoh's Tomb*.

In this lively and imaginative quartet of arcade-adventure games, players assume the role of Nevada Smith with the objective of finding that lost tomb with its reportedly vast array of archaeological — and golden — treasures. At each succeeding, more challenging level (with some easy ones thrown in along the way), one faces nastier booby traps and rabid tomb-enslaved monsters.

What makes this series so successful is the masterfully clever programming and screen design, the artful exploitation of available screen colors, and the unpredictability of each level. The games use a special animation system, FAST (Fluid Animation Software Technology), that provides flicker-free movement, even on older and slower PCs. One can also move around via a user-customized keyboard interface. The space bar controls jumping, one of the primary activities and necessary in order to escape poison darts, climb the serpentine walls, and collect both points and extra life bonuses hidden randomly in the walls.

Poison darts are the least of the obstacles. There is, at least, some warning when the traps which launch them are triggered. There are also moving jaws of death that rise from the floor and descend from the ceiling, not to mention the ubiquitous vampire bats which are ready to feast upon Nevada's carcass, or the 16-ton weights that spring from the wall in order to crush him when he isn't fast enough. Those crafty Egyptians didn't want anyone messing in their tombs, so they left zombies behind to foil Nevada's plans. And if that's not enough, there are platforms which move both vertically and horizontally, requiring expert timing to navigate. One slip and one can fall into a pit of razor-sharp spears. Along a number of paths are essential magic scrolls. Find them and, usually, either booby traps will disappear or new exits and entrances may appear. Still, even the scrolls are unreliable. Some might cause Nevada to be entombed forever at that level. When that happens, the game must be saved at the current level and then restored to begin again at the start of that level.

If *Pharaoh's Tomb* teaches anything, it is to be aware of one's surroundings. The wise explorer looks around and ahead at each level to see what needs to be done to master the level and move ahead. Players get five "lives" to play with and two spears, but it is possible to earn more of both along the tortuous expedition. Note that one does not have to eliminate all the obstacles which crop up along the path in order to continue the journey. Sometimes, evasion is better than elimination, so that players can save those spears for when they are *really* needed.

Sometimes, players will have to direct Nevada's journey beyond what seems an obvious distance in order to trigger the release of a hidden passage. Sometimes it will look like there is a trigger for a hidden passage, but it turns out not to be the type of 'passage' anyone would intend to take so early in life. The wise player is constantly aware of the tomb environment and explores the walls whenever possible to find the hidden points and eggs of life located there. Yet it is necessary to jump at precisely the right moment and correct angle to avoid those occasional booby traps.

Pharaoh's Tomb is obviously a take-off on the Indiana Jones films and the actual play is highly reminiscent of the classic *Miner 2049er* arcade game that was such a hit on Atari and Commodore 8-bit machines a few years back. The combination works well and will provide hundreds of hours of fun.

The programs use CGA graphics which are quite similar to some of the action games of a couple of years back, but they are not without some merit. Also, those who have faster machines will be glad to know that there is an automatic adjustment to the processor speed of the IBM or compatible PC used. Some will be disappointed that *Pharaoh's Tomb* offers no mouse support and only works with the user-selected keyboard commands. Included with the purchase of each game is a hint sheet and a secret cheat key code to give players unlimited lives and spears. The package will also contain some free samples of other games Apogee produces.

Scott Miller of **Apogee Software** is so sure that computer gamers will love the game that he offers it for free trial. The first game comes as shareware and can be found for downloading on virtually every major bulletin board and service (CompuServe, GEnie, Executive Network, for example). After sampling the first 20 levels, most players find themselves "hooked." Fortunately, the low price for the entire package is just as enticing as the game play. "Raiders of the Lost Tomb," "Pharaoh's Curse," "Temple of Terror," and "Nevada's Revenge" are the four games that will follow. It's an outstanding value. **CGW**

Mass(es) Times the Things We Write, Squared

by Johnny L. Wilson

State of the Magazine: Some feel that in *CGW* #79 (p.28), Scorpia verbally "tarred and feathered" both **New World Computing** and their *Tunnels & Trolls* product by stating that *either* the company needs better playtesters *or* they were trying to make a "quick buck." By couching the phrase as an "or else" statement, we believed that Scorpia had addressed the tension which *every* software publisher experiences between an expensive playtesting process and a timely, business-like shipping date. We believed that the use of "or else" in the article implicitly created an either/or statement and *did not* specifically accuse **New World** of trying to make a "quick buck." Unfortunately, several people only saw the latter portion of the statement and jumped to the most negative conclusion.

Therefore, let us state for the record that *CGW* does not believe that **New World** went after the "quick buck." Note that the beginning of the sentence says, "It looks as though..." This is talking about a sad appearance, not a definitive fact. It does illustrate, however, the difference between a feature article and an "opinion" piece. *CGW* would not have printed such a statement in an ordinary review, but we have granted our columnists more latitude. Columnists tend to have their own following who understand what their points of reference happen to be.

Even "inanimate objects," like magazines, experience stress due to the fact that they are envisioned and assembled by the efforts of human beings. *Computer Gaming World* is no exception. The tripling of our circulation, changes in production schedule, personnel adjustments and "winds of change" within the industry we cover have all affected the editorial perspective of the magazine.

In particular, the increased circulation means that we have more "casual" gamers reading the magazine and less "grognards." Most of the latter group should recognize the term for Napoleonic French veterans that comes from the verb, "to grumble." Most of the former would question the use of such an esoteric term.

Hence, *CGW* constantly faces an editorial dilemma. That is, how do we continue to provide coverage that meets the esoteric and, often, erudite needs of the "grognard" without losing the gains which we are making in terms of reaching the mainstream consumers? How do we meet those needs without losing the focus of that *extra* behind-the-scenes insight that the "grognard" has come to depend upon?

For example, many readers would like for us to publish shorter reviews with clearer "bottom lines;" readers looking for a quick "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" in our evaluation of a game. Although some publications may try to cater to this desire, we do not believe that "bottom line" reviews are good "criticism." We believe that they are predominantly authoritative to people who are either lazy, frightened or submissive. They want someone else to make the decision for them as to whether to buy or not to buy.

At *CGW*, we attempt to stay away from "bottom line" reviews (Scorpia, as a *columnist* and *opinion* writer, should be the glaring exception to this rule) because we feel that it insults our readers. Our readers tend to be college-educated, upscale and interested in technology. The task for critics who serve that type of target audience is *not* to patronize its readers. It is to *challenge* them. One does not have to agree with Scorpia or any other columnist in order to be stimulated by their opinion.

Hence, our reviews tend to offer not only descriptions of game mechanics and background, but suggestions for design changes, critical analysis of the "real life" model for the game, strategy and tactics, reflections on the game's philosophy (sometimes, citing a trend in the designer's/developer's body of work) and a summary stating the appropriate audience which we believe the work can reach. If one only peruses the final paragraphs of *CGW* reviews, one gets a distorted perception of our work. On the other hand, our opinion columns (whether written by Scorpia, Steve Witzel, Dennis Owens or a guest columnist) are *personal* opinions which are intended to stimulate thought rather than to be the last word on a subject. We have no desire to cater to a lowest common denominator in *CGW*. We want to offer the most incisive coverage available.

Unfortunately, such a desire does not always translate into reality. With the increase in editorial pages came the increased possibility of errors of fact and/or judgment. Although these are mercifully rare, they occasionally slip through. In a recent response to a frustrated Apple IIGS owner, this editor referred to the wrong processor, subconsciously envisioning every Apple II (including the IIGS) with a 6502 processor. *Mea culpa!* We know the IIGS uses the 65816, but the point that developers do not want to support the IIGS remains well-taken.

We *want* to offer the most incisive coverage available, but we hope our readers will be supportive as we attempt to transform the inevitable stress associated with a growing, and hopefully, improving magazine into a positive energy at the disposal of *all* our readers. **CGW**

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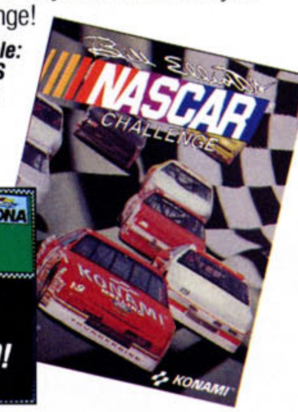
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